

Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives

New critical perspectives

David B. Dodd
and Christopher A. Faraone

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RITUALS AND NARRATIVES

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*David B. Dodd and
Christopher A. Faraone*

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PREFACE

David B. Dodd

Initiation as a category with psychoanalytic, phenomenological and structuralist values was a popular topic from the 1950s through the 1970s. I am thinking here both of the use of initiation by scholars influenced by C.G. Jung such as Mircea Eliade and Joseph Campbell and of the recuperation of Arnold Van Gennep's notion of rites of passage by anthropologists of a structuralist bent, most famously Victor Turner. The social sciences of this period were to a large degree characterized by an express desire to produce a positive science of the human, which was perhaps most strikingly articulated in Claude Lévi-Strauss' ideas (1958: 257) for laboratories and research teams that could analyze and derive accurately the quasi-mathematical formula of each of the world's myths.

From the 1960s on, a more critical strain of thought emerged in the fields of psychology and continental philosophy, which challenged the very nature of such positivism. This strain, associated most closely with the names Foucault and Derrida, but also including anarchist and Marxist cultural criticism, feminism and anti-psychiatry, has shown little interest in initiation. While this may be partly the result of intellectual fads changing, Bruce Lincoln has argued that this critical theory ultimately renders the study of the category of initiation irrelevant, since it reveals it to be merely a tool for the production of false consciousness. Lincoln (1991) presents this argument powerfully and strikingly, as an afterword to the second edition of his book, *Emerging from the Chrysalis*, a study of female initiation originally conducted very much under the influence of Eliade's work.

The popularity of initiation as a useful category for studies of classical antiquity goes back, at least in part, to work of Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet which quite openly declares its debt to both Lévi-Strauss and Van Gennep. While they were not the first to use the category for studying ancient material, and while initiation is only one of the anthropological concepts they employ, their work radically changed the study of the ancient Greek world in two important ways. First, familiarity with their work seems to have provided a better informed audience for accounts of Greek religion and society published later by Jan Bremmer, Walter Burkert, Claude Calame,

Henk Versnel and others working in Europe. But perhaps more significantly, work on initiation by these scholars, and earlier studies by Henri Jeanmaire and others, have created a kind of Kuhnian paradigm, which in turn has encouraged the often uncritical acceptance of the view that initiation was a common and coherently legible phenomenon within the Greek world and that it provides the hermeneutical keys to interpreting a wide array of cultural and literary productions.

The essays collected here present critical perspectives on this seemingly monolithic paradigm of initiation – without, we hope, throwing out the baby with the bathwater. Although most of our contributors are clearly frustrated with the initiation paradigm itself, or with its increasingly wide and uncritical application, they are not satisfied with simply offering a critique. Rather it is our hope to develop tools and perspectives that would help organize and interpret the ancient data better than previous studies had in at least three different and in some cases mutually exclusive ways: (i) by denying the nearly universal application of the traditional paradigm to every Greek ceremony and narrative and insisting instead on a careful case-by-case investigation; (ii) by extending the paradigm or making it more complicated and nuanced; or (iii) by denying its helpfulness outright and suggesting new models or paradigms that might be more effective.

This book collects, with one exception, papers that were originally delivered at the conference, “Beyond Initiation: Transitions and Power in Ancient Rituals and Narratives,” at the Franke Institute of Humanities at the University of Chicago in April 2000. This conference had two sources of inspiration. In 1998, two graduate students, Radcliffe Edmonds and myself, were writing dissertations with Chris Faraone, which, in part, examined how theories of initiation had been applied to Greek literature. Our work was independent of each other’s in as much as Radcliffe was discussing myths of journeys to the underworld and I was considering narrative representations of adolescence, but we both concluded that the popular model of initiation rites or initiatory motifs was no longer adequate for making full sense of the features of many classical Greek narratives, and in some cases it was clearly detrimental.

In the winter of that same year, Chris, Gloria Ferrari and Laura Slatkin co-taught a graduate seminar at Chicago entitled “Text, Image and the Representation of Ritual” to which Fritz Graf was a regular visitor. By sheer coincidence, Chris and Gloria gave presentations to that seminar in which they, too, underscored the shortcomings of the “initiation paradigm” as it was being applied to two very different rituals celebrated by or for Athenian girls and women: the ritual of “playing the bear” at Brauron and the wedding. The following year, I organized a conference at Chicago called “Queer Republic? Homosexuality in Greek Politics and Political Thought,” which featured, among other things, a lecture by David Leitao and responses by Martha Nussbaum and James Redfield. This conference generated yet

another series of discussions about male adolescence and initiation rituals and revealed once again our collective frustration about the limitations of the traditional initiation paradigm or the wisdom of applying it uncritically to so many different ceremonies and texts.

At that point it was clear that a critical re-evaluation of the paradigm and its increasingly global use was warranted and when Chris suggested to me that we organize a conference on the subject of initiation in ancient ritual and narrative, we had little trouble coming up with a list of people who had fresh and critical perspectives on a wide variety of topics all connected in one way or another with initiation. In preparing for the conference, we asked our participants to examine a specific narrative or ceremony and to judge whether the popular initiatory models of Van Gennep, Turner or anyone else were an aid or a hindrance to understanding the data that they were examining.

At the time, we invited a number of scholars of non-Hellenic ancient cultures to join us, and although the conference did feature one presentation on ancient China and another on ancient Israel, it became quite clear that the concept of initiation had not been a very useful one to the scholars studying other ancient cultures. Although initially disappointing to us, this discovery cast further doubt on the popular use of the initiation paradigm among scholars of ancient Greece, for if such rites and beliefs were indeed universal, why was the paradigm so unhelpful in the study of ancient Chinese, Egyptian, Mesopotamian or even Roman rites and narratives? Thus this failed effort to cast our nets wide in the scholarship of ancient cultures made it clear that a critique of the category of initiation was very much a local problem and that it needed to be carried out primarily for the study of Greek culture. As a result – and in spite of our keen desire and effort to make it otherwise – the focus of nearly all the essays in this book is on the ancient Greek world.

It is also interesting to note that although we encouraged our participants to examine any and all theoretical models for initiation, it turned out that nearly all of the essays collected here focus on Van Gennep or the way that his original theory has been deployed by twentieth-century classicists. In short, although Turner, Eliade and others have had a great impact on the wider study of initiation, it seems for the most part that Van Gennep's theory alone has been good for classicists to think with.

Finally, it should be obvious from a glance at the table of contents that this volume is not designed to provide a comprehensive discussion of *all* rites and narratives to which the label initiatory has been applied. There is, for example, no discussion of the Eleusinian or Samothracian mysteries, groups such as the Pythagoreans or such central literary texts as the Euripides' *Bacchae*. The reader may infer from this fact that the application of the paradigm to these topics is, in fact, far less controversial. This book is, in short, just a first step to a wider examination of the usefulness of the model

PREFACE

or concept of initiation in the study of the ancient Greek world, and we have little doubt that there will always be some cases in which the category of initiation will be extremely helpful. Our ultimate goal, then, is not to bypass the concept entirely, but rather to examine it critically, define it more closely, and use it more sparingly.

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We would like to thank the Franke Institute for the Humanities, the Department of Classics, the Committee on the Ancient Mediterranean World, and the Divinity School – all at the University of Chicago – for their support, financial and otherwise, of the two conferences mentioned above. The Franke Institute, in addition, provided at different points year-long research fellowships to three of the contributors (Edmonds, Faraone and Moyer), which were used, in part, to write and edit various parts of this volume. Gratitude is due also to the University of Chicago Press for allowing the use (in Cristiano Grottanelli's essay) of an extended section of David Grene's translation, *Herodotus: The History* (1987), and to Shadi Bartsch, the editor of *Classical Philology*, and the University of Chicago Press for allowing us to print here a slightly altered version of Sarah Johnston's essay, which appeared in *Classical Philology*. Finally we would like to acknowledge the work of Dan Belnap and Tracy Davis on the bibliography and preliminary drafts of the indices.

ABBREVIATIONS AND TRANSLITERATIONS

The abbreviations below are used for oft-cited books and reference works. All other references to modern works consist of author's name and the date of publication; full citations can be found in the bibliography at the end of this volume. In transliterating Greek, it has seemed reasonable, if not entirely consistent, to use a Latinized spelling for names for which this has become "normal" English usage (e.g. "Heracles") and in other cases to use a direct transliteration from the Greek.

- ABV* J.D. Beazley, *Attic Black-Figure Vase Painters* (Oxford 1956)
ARV J.D. Beazley, *Attic Red-Figure Vase Painters* (2nd edn, Oxford 1963)
FGrH F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin/Leiden 1923-58)
FHG C. and T. Müller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, 4 vols. (Paris 1841)
GMPT H.D. Betz, ed. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago 1986)
IG *Inscriptiones Graecae* (Berlin 1873–present)
LdÄ *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*
LIMC *Lexikon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (Zurich 1981–present)
LSJ H.G. Liddell, R. Scott and H.S. Jones eds. *Greek–English Lexicon with a Supplement* (9th edn, Oxford 1968)
MAMA *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* (Manchester 1928–61)
PDM Demotic Egyptian magical papyri translated in *GMPT*
PGM K. Preisendanz [and A. Henrichs] eds. *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (2nd edn, Stuttgart 1973–74)
RE Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart 1894–1980)
SEG *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (Leiden 1923–present)
Urk. II K. Sethe ed., *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums*. Section II: *Hieroglyphische Urkunden der griechisch-römischen Zeit* (1904–16)

Part I

INTRODUCTION

INITIATION

A concept with a troubled history

Fritz Graf

In contemporary culture even outside the narrow circle of scholarship, initiation has become, over the last century, a household word. Two citations express our culture's orthodoxy about initiation. When, in Robert Heinlein's *Time Enough for Love*, the sometimes unruly (and almost immortal) narrator has to introduce some of his sons into sexuality, he makes a short remark: "Sure, there are rites of passage for males as well as females; every culture has them, even those that aren't aware of it."¹ A much earlier voice has told us why this should be so: "Initiation may be traced to a period of the most remote antiquity". Thus the Reverend George Oliver, Doctor of Divinity and Bishop of Shropshire, in the first of twelve lectures he gave on *The History of Initiation . . . , Comprising a Detailed Account of the Rites and Ceremonies, Doctrines and Disciplines of All the Secret and Mysterious Institutions of the Ancient World*, published in 1840. Initiation rites, then, are part and parcel of human history, they are an anthropological constant going back to our earliest times, and (not the least) they are "secret and mysterious". Of course, the learned bishop and freemason had to say no less, since he set out to give the most impressive pedigree possible to his own Masonic ritual predilections. In doing so, he made ample use of the works of earlier scholars – not the least of someone whom the Anglican bishop, I assume, would rather not publicly acknowledge as his spiritual father: initiation both primitive and Greek is already present in the two volumes in which the Jesuit Father Josèphe François Lafitau, in 1724, compared the customs of the American savages with those of the first humans altogether.² The initiation rites – *les rites initiatiques* – of the Iroquois and the Hurons which he personally witnessed (the rites so impressively captured, some two centuries later, though in another tribe, in *A Man Called Horse*) immediately evoked in Father Lafitau the memory of the initiations at Eleusis and sent him unto the slippery path of a diffusionist theory that made them into an important part of early man's religious legacy.³ A glimpse into any of the volumes that record a major

congress on the topic, organized at the university of Montpellier in 1990, can show how much these assumptions are still alive in the studies of Greek and Roman culture and literature.⁴

A glorious past

Initiation, thus, was thought of as a human universal of extremely great age. In the prevailing historicizing and evolutionist model of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these two characteristics meant about the same thing: any human universal should go back before the primeval Age of the Scattering (whatever time span that implies for a modern palaeoanthropologist). Second, the term was oscillating between two meanings that we keep apart. The first is the initiation into the secrecy of mysteries, especially those of Eleusis, according to Father Lafitau, whereas the Reverend Oliver dwelt at length on the much more spectacular mysteries of Bacchus, mainly by embellishing the already rather novelistic story of Livy on the scandal which shocked Rome in 186 BC.⁵ The second is initiation as a life crisis ritual, the transformation of children (or adolescents) into full adults – the rites Lafitau had observed among his savages. The first meaning leads back to the very roots of our terminology: Latin *initia* is Cicero's and Varro's rendering of Greek *mystêria*, applied to Eleusis and Samothrace, while *initiare* as a translation of Greek *mueisthai* ("to initiate into a mystery cult") and *initiatu*s as the Latin equivalent of Greek *memuéménos* ("initiate of a mystery cult") are at least a century older.⁶ Via the derivative noun *initiatio*, first used by Suetonius for the ritual introduction into the Eleusinian mysteries,⁷ the term arrived in Father Lafitau's French and in the Reverend Oliver's English anthropological terminology, and from there started to make its career in twentieth-century anthropology.

Lafitau's use, thus, carried the day; he applied it both to the mystery cults of Greece and Rome and to the puberty rites – as we would say – of his Huron and Iroquois: in a literal sense to the former, as a metaphor to the latter – since, strictly speaking, the use of the term outside ancient mystery cults is metaphor, and a rather bold one, based on some phenomenological similarities. The term in its metaphorical meaning became current in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ethnographical reports and, in the later nineteenth century, in the theorizing of the armchair ethnographers – not the least, of course, Frazer: his two volumes on *Balder the Beautiful* contain a long chapter on "The Ritual of Death and Resurrection" in "certain initiatory rites" that "lads at puberty" had to undergo.⁸

Frazer, though, was interested only in the imagery of death and rebirth found in many initiatory cults; he had no interest in initiation as such. Nor had Arnold Van Gennep, the Belgian folklorist, who taught in Switzerland until he left it somewhat abruptly, and who in 1909 described the conceptual and structural framework to better formalize these rites of transition and put

them into a wider context. He included what he called “les rites d’initiation” in the wider framework of his tripartite rites of passage, and he subdivided them (assuming, but not really insisting on an evolutionary development) into puberty rites, rites introducing new members into secret societies, introduction into mystery cults, Christianity (“religions universalistes”, especially baptism), religious fraternities and orders, professional societies and specific functions like priests and sorcerers, kings and sacred prostitutes – a valid classification that is all too often overlooked by less neat followers.⁹

It was ethnographers with an outspoken interest in society and sociology who, at the turn of the century, focused on these rituals, Hans Schurtz in Germany with his *Altersklassen und Männerbünde* of 1902, Hutton Webster in the United States with *Primitive Secret Societies* of 1908, the tandem Marcel Mauss and Henri Hubert in France in an article from 1909.¹⁰ These works, combined with Durkheim’s theory of the social origin of religion, inspired Jane Ellen Harrison to look for traces of similar rites in ancient Greece.¹¹

The result of this research was *Themis: A Study of the Social Origin of Greek Religion*, published for the first time in 1911. The book – which would have been revolutionary, had it had an immediate impact – opens with a long interpretation of the Palaikastro hymn, a epigraphical hymn to Zeus of early Hellenistic date, excavated in Western Crete in 1905 and published by Gilbert Murray in 1908.¹²

The hymn praises Zeus as the *megistos kouros*, “greatest young man”, and it describes his entourage of leaping and dancing Kouretes, “male adolescents”, Zeus’ own dancing and the power this has over human life, both social and agricultural. Strangely enough for a modern reader, it reminded Harrison immediately of the Orphic myth of Dionysus, his entourage of Titans and his dismemberment. She read this myth as the etiological story for the Cretan dances of the young Kouretes, and she used it to elegantly break away both from Frazer and from her earlier work: asking herself what the myth of killing and resurrecting the baby Dionysus could mean, she answered:

The orthodox explanation is that the child is a sort of vegetation spirit or corn-baby, torn to pieces in winter, revived in spring . . . I offer a simpler and I think more complete explanation. Every single element, however seemingly preposterous, in both the ritual and myth of Zagreus can be explained I believe by the analogy of primitive rites of tribal initiation.¹³

Initiation – or puberty rite – thus enters the Greek world as the challenge to the Usener-Frazer fertility paradigm, termed by Jane Ellen Harrison as “orthodox”: initiation offered a new, unorthodox paradigm for the understanding of Greek religion and myth. To be fair, Harrison was not the first to look at initiation rites in order to understand Greek rites. Lafitau had already done so, and (as far as I know, independently) so did Andrew Lang, that learned scholar whose fame has

been eclipsed by the Cambridge group, when he connected “certain features in the mysteries” with “the mysteries of savage races”.¹⁴ But these occasional remarks stayed on the level of learned observations and never turned into a theory, unlike Harrison’s.¹⁵ Her insight, however, did not immediately turn into the new orthodoxy, although Gilbert Murray, the Oxford Regius Professor of Greek and her close friend of many years, took it immediately up in some memorable pages of his *Four Stages of Greek Religion* of 1912, urging that “this whole subject of Greek initiation ceremonies calls pressingly for more investigation”.¹⁶ But the call went unheard, and the fertility paradigm dominated the study of Greek religion up to the death of Martin Nilsson in 1964. During all this time, initiation was marginal – and not even provocative; its proponents lived at the margins of the European scholarly community. Henri Jeanmaire, whose *Couroi et Courètes* of 1939 followed the insights of Jane Ellen Harrison and built them into a much wider panorama, taught and published in Lille, not in Paris – nor did Louis Gernet, whose splendid “Dolon le loup” of 1936 is another early example of an initiatory explanation;¹⁷ and Angelo Brelich’s very learned and theoretically sophisticated *Paides e Parthenoi* of 1969 never made the impact it deserved – otherwise his intriguing and challenging statement that higher societies (“le così dette civiltà superiori”) did not have puberty rites would not have been so constantly overlooked.¹⁸ It was only when one of the centers of scholarship finally became involved that the paradigm began to become highly visible: Pierre Vidal-Naquet and the “Black Hunter”, published simultaneously in 1968 in Cambridge and in Paris and reiterated in several variants, reinstated the topic,¹⁹ and in that very same year, Jean-Pierre Vernant’s collection of Gernet’s papers opened our eyes to the elegance of “Dolon le loup”. The new orthodoxy grew during the 1970s and expanded in the 1980s and 1990s, from history of religion to the study of Greek and Roman literature; for literature, it was especially Claude Calame’s *Les chœurs des jeunes filles* of 1977 that built the bridge, though it was only the English translation of 1997 that really confirmed it as the new orthodoxy.²⁰ It is no coincidence that Arnold van Gennep’s book, although never neglected, gained new luster during this period, not least because of what one could call its “protostructuralist” approach.²¹

Thus, I would argue strongly that part of the fascination with the topic stems from its originally subversive character: it is no coincidence that the relevant dates all crowd around 1968 and that the most visible propagators of the paradigm – Christiane Sourvinou Inwood, Jan Bremmer, Claude Calame, Bruce Lincoln, James Redfield, myself²² – are in about the same age-group. The changing world of those years was helpful in overcoming the Nilssonian paradigm, and the new awareness of society as a powerful entity with a high tendency to impose its normative tradition upon reluctant individuals, and to perpetuate itself by pressuring the young into a mould from which they had no chance to escape, made the institution of initiation suddenly highly topical and relevant.²³ This description of the institution makes it look rather specious

today, to say the least, but it highlights one of the problems of ethnological initiation rites, namely how to cope not only with a changing society but with a society that expected active and deliberate changes from its members during their lifetime.

There is more. Writing about the consequences of her theory, Jane Ellen Harrison was well aware that one might perceive her as overstepping a boundary: "Anthropologists have been sometimes blamed, and perhaps with justice, for the fiendish glee with which, as though they were Christian Fathers, they seize on barbarous survivals in Greek religion or literature".²⁴ Highlighting those rites in Greece – rites found in "primitive" cultures around the globe – contradicted the prevailing classicism and humanism of Greek studies during much of the last century. This is very visible with Henri Jeanmaire. A firm believer in historical continuity, he had to construct a bridge between Africa, where he found his anthropological models, and Greece, where he perceived initiation rites. Thus, well before Martin Bernal (and without the latter's notice) he squeezed the early Greeks into the same "cultural sphere" ("Kulturkreis") as the sub-Saharan West African societies whose initiation rites he found relevant for Greece; in doing so, he made use of the by-now-discarded theoretical model that the German 'ethnologist' Leo Frobenius and his followers developed between the two Wars.²⁵ Thus, initiation rituals exhibited another form of subversiveness: they nicely undercut the humanist and classicist paradigm, as did other theories whose success began to be visible in the later 1960s, like Parry's oral Homer or Burkert's neolithic roots of Greek animal sacrifice:²⁶ it was another welcome weapon for modernizing classics and, of course, for father-killing after 1968.²⁷

Somewhat earlier than this, initiation had moved from social anthropology into the wide field of history and religion, and into cultural studies in general. It was very much Mircea Eliade who opened it up in this way, by taking up a clue from Frazer and using this as a key to read initiation rites as a worldwide phenomenon in nearly all civilizations in his *Birth and Rebirth* of 1958, for whose paperback edition of 1965 he changed the title into *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*.²⁸ This parallels the globalization of shamanism also largely due to Eliade (and convincingly refuted long ago):²⁹ in those years, Eliade's global approach seemed to break down the Frazerian wall between Them (tribal societies) and Us and thus resonated deeply in Western culture. The same Eliade introduced a conference on the topic, held in 1964, with a paper on initiation and the modern world;³⁰ the topics covered in this conference ranged from Black Africa to Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, and one participant goes as far as reading religion (theoretically any religion, practically a romanticized version of Protestantism) as initiation.³¹ The irony in all this is that here (at least in Eliade's reading), the atmosphere was decidedly one of nostalgia and not of modernization:

The nostalgia for the trials and initiation scenarios, a nostalgia seen in so many works of literature and art, reveals a desire in modern man

for a final and total renewal, for a renovation that would transform the entire existence.³²

This is not only a typical Eliade movement but characterized the study of religion in the middle of the twentieth century, as Steven Wasserstrom has pointed out;³³ it has its root in the anti-historicism and cosmic mysticism of the late 1920s and 1930s, but surfaced again, at least in large parts of Europe, in the ideological vacuum after the defeat of Germany. Neither Vidal-Naquet nor anyone among his younger followers had, at that time, seen this other agenda; our paradigms came from social anthropology, not from history of religion.

Thus, the success of the initiation paradigm, as I see it, has much to do with wider societal changes in the later twentieth century and was fed from two sides, social anthropology and history of religion, as the success of the fertility paradigm had much to do with the political and social changes in later nineteenth-century Europe, with its urbanization and industrialization and the concomitant nostalgia and idealization of the primeval rural life. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that the new paradigms were wrong – after a generation of polemics against the fertility paradigm, one begins to see some of its relevance. Although we now run immediately into the problem of what truth in our studies is. On the one hand, I certainly am no advocate of an objective and transcendental truth in history which just waits around the corner to be found – or, in Lessing's famous image, is seductively presented to us by a god who, in the end, never reveals it. On the other hand, the radical definition of truth as the one explanatory model which a given society embraces and transmits because it neatly dovetails into its own needs and preoccupations, is not all too helpful either. It is a circular view, nearly as naive as the one of a transcendental truth. Thus, truth rather results from the interplay between our own needs and demands, as a society and as individuals, and the resilience of historical facts and data – a definition that forces us to struggle with those data, as we all do. Given the data of Greek society, religion and mythology, what explanatory value does the initiatory paradigm have in present day science of antiquity?

A problematic present

If the vast number of publications in the field has some indicative value, the paradigm should have considerable explanatory power for ancient societies as well. The large international conference, however, that the University of Montpellier in France dedicated to the topic of initiation in 1991 – the first of such a magnitude – was somewhat disillusioning; because of its very broad approaches and its not infrequent lack of clear differentiations (despite the model of Van Gennep's work) it demonstrated more clearly the pitfalls and problems of the contemporary use of the paradigm than its interpretative

value.³⁴ Let me, in this second part of this chapter, look at some of them. They concern first the rituals, then the myths.

The rituals

The history of research has already underlined a very basic fact: initiation in its application to Greece wavers between two widely different meanings – between what Lafitau and the Reverend Oliver found in Greece, initiation rites as secret introductory rites into the different mystery cults, and what late nineteenth-century scholarship called tribal initiation or puberty rites, on which Jane Ellen Harrison and their followers focused. However, Jane Ellen Harrison, when associating the Orphic myth of Dionysus with this ritual complex, somehow did not really dissociate the two, nor do some more recent scholars, like the author of an initiatory interpretation of the *Odyssey*.³⁵ The dichotomy is vital, though. It is by now rather hackneyed to point out that the Greek words for “initiation” are all connected with mystery cults, be it the more general *teletê*, “rite, especially mystery initiation rite”, or the more specific *mnêsis*, “individual initiation into a mystery cult, esp. Eleusis”, and that, in ancient Greek, no term for initiation in the sense of “puberty rites” or “tribal initiations” exists.³⁶ This absence is generally pointed out by scholars who are skeptical towards the concept anyway,³⁷ and they take it to mean that the institution in a form that would be recognizable for a social anthropologist did not exist in Greece, that is, to put it in a nutshell, as a ritual of some duration, conforming to the general pattern of the rites of passage, and having as its central theme, as Gilbert Lewis put it, “that of successful growth and development of the individual”,³⁸ introducing all and sundry adolescent members of the tribe into the world of the adults, into their gender roles, their tasks, obligations and privileges as adults and at the same into the religious, spiritual and political traditions of their society. Ordinarily, the members of the initiating generation were the model of the successful individual to the next generation. In reality, as especially Angelo Brelich showed, the institution looks somewhat less uniform than this, with rites held together rather because of family resemblance than because of one common phenomenology.³⁹

Both the absence of the terminology and the consequences of its absence need some more thought, though. It is certainly true that there is no general Greek term for the ritual in question. But there are many local terms for rites that concern the introduction of the pubescent young men or women into the adult world – the Spartan *kruptheia*, the Athenian *ephêbeia* and *arkteia*, or the *mallokokouria* in Roman Egypt;⁴⁰ there are the verbs *kourizēin* in Homer and Hesiod or the Macedonian verb *nebrizēin* which Michael Hatzopoulos elucidated;⁴¹ there are the Spartan and Cretan *agela* to designate an age class of young men, and there are the many Cretan terms for young men, *dromeus*, *apodromos*, (*pan*)*azostos* and *ekduomenos*, known from local inscriptions especially from Dreros and Knossos.⁴² The detailed analysis of all these terms

showed a wide variety of ritual forms, durations and ages, but an overall phenomenology that in many cases can be understood from ethnological puberty rites. What then follows from these facts is not so much the absence of such rites in Greece, but their very high level of local variation: this is what one would expect from rites so closely tied to single communities and their identity. There could, by definition, be no pan-Hellenic initiation rites, only Cnossian or Drerian or Spartan or Athenian ones.

This variation, though, is not without its problems. Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that there is not only a phenomenological but also a historical connection between all those Greek rites, in the sense that the assumed forbearers of the historical Greeks – those Indo-Europeans who trickled or immigrated into the Greek peninsula – shared a common institution dealing with the initiation of their young men and women.⁴³ The attestation of many widely different local forms – some in rather marginal regions of the Greek world – could underpin such an assumption: we would be confronted with the broken up traces of something that in former times had been much more widespread but has been transformed or altogether abolished by more recent developments that did, however, not affect more marginal areas, Eastern Crete, Arcadia, Thessaly, Northwestern mainland Greece. An analogy from the history of language might come in useful: the pattern somehow resembles the medieval and modern distribution of the Romance languages, split up between Southwestern Europe and Romania by the expansion of the Germanic and the Slavonic languages, or the one of the Celtic languages split up by the expansion of French, Spanish, and English into remnants in Northern Spain, Brittany, Wales, and Ireland. The main difference in the linguistic analogy would be that the distribution did not result from immigration or conquest, for example by German-speaking tribes (if anything, the immigrant Dorians of Sparta and Crete seem to be more initiation prone than the autochthonous Athenians), but from a somewhat different pace in societal development that did not affect the margins as strongly as it did the center.

The analogy, however, needs further development. The two language groups used, Celtic and Romance languages, do not exactly parallel each other. Celtic languages are the languages spoken by the Celts: this is a static model, in which the extant languages more or less reproduce, in their distribution, the language that has been split up by the immigrations in early medieval times. For the Romance languages, however, we adopted a dynamic model: they are the languages that diachronically developed, out of the Latin spoken by the conquerors, into several languages, each very different from all the others: the extant Romance languages thus do not adequately reproduce the one split up language (to the extent that Dante Alighieri, not a mean thinker, assumed that Latin was virtual language, never spoken by any living being). And of course no linguist worth his money would underwrite to a static model for the Celtic languages either; they too have developed from each other after the split.

Once we conceptualize these two models in this way, it becomes clear that we are dealing with a dynamic model for initiation as well: the rites of the Cretan towns look different from each other and even more so from those in Thessaly or Acarnania. But since, as we tentatively agreed, in the case of initiation we cannot assume an intrusion of foreign cultures but have to reckon with Greek societal developments at widely varying paces and into widely varying directions, another problem arises: where do we cut, if we cut at all? Don't we rather deal with a continuum, ranging from rites that any ethnographer could still recognize to rites that are far beyond that point? In other words: would the complex Spartan system that helped to militarize all young Spartiates (but not the helots) still qualify as initiation rite *stricto sensu*, and would that be true as well for the very different *ephêbeia* in Hellenistic or imperial Athens that concerned the upper class boys only and introduced them as much into Athenian religion and culture as into the art of warfare? Or would we have to restrict the use to those rites that still conform to a phenomenology constructed from the ethnographical material, along the findings in the first chapter of Brelich's book? This quandary shows that the problem does not change if we give up an evolutionist approach and focus on phenomenology instead, given the fluidity of any such reconstruction outside Greece. Since we deal with rites whose outstanding characteristic is a family resemblance, the template is a spectrum rather than a firmly outlined set of phenomena: would we then have to break up the Greek facts at a point where we feel they would no more conform to the ethnographical template – but where does family resemblance stop? Are we not rather incurring the danger of becoming circular, since the characteristics of family resemblance are derived as much from what we know about who is family and who is not as from observing the individual features of family members: we exclude Uncle Herbert's aquiline nose from the set of family resemblance as much because we know that he really married into the family, as because really no known member of the family has such a nose.

The problem is exacerbated because there is no indigenous overarching term to help us; if there were, we could just use the Greek word and pretend that this Greek phenomenon would have (or not have, according to one's taste) a connection with similar ethnological facts. This would save us from the well-known problem in the study of Greek religion that there are many scholars who shun any use of non-Greek terms and side with no lesser scholar than Wilamowitz and his grumbling dismissal of contemporary terminology like "totem and taboo, mana and orenda": "I do not understand the languages these terms come from, and I think it legitimate to think Greek about things Greek".⁴⁴

We all agree that this view is much too narrow, and that we often have to rely on terminology developed outside our own discipline to deal with our material. And scholarship has its rules on how to deal with such a problem. The proposal that a given culture lacks a term for a specific phenomenon is

after all very current in anthropological research, and often there are compelling reasons for the use of a scholarly non-native term for certain phenomena even where there would be a native term as well, be it to maintain comparability with other cultures, or more simply just to understand what is going on. In these cases, thoughtful scholars define the term before they use it for their own culture – this is the recipe that Henk Versnel formulated for the use of the complex term “magic” in discussing ritual phenomena in Greece and Rome.⁴⁵ Compared to the use of “initiation”, the use of “magic” is somewhat easier since it is an ancient term for which we can find ancient definitions. But even there, these definitions gain full significance and value only when confronted with contemporary scholarly ones: all the more useful and necessary to be circumspect, one should think, when using “initiation”. But the use of a contemporary term has its limitations; we either define the term according to the ethnographical common usage, or according to our own phenomena. The former way might force us to reject an important set of our own data as no longer pertinent, the latter might lead to a definition that cannot be shared with other disciplines any more.

The problem becomes clearer when we look at a case that recently inspired some scholarly debate. There is a sort of orthodoxy that says that the Athenian *arrhephoria* has to do with initiation rites, even is a rite of initiation. From Henri Jeanmaire to Angelo Brelich to Pierre Brulé, there is unanimity in calling the ritual an initiation rite; Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, only slightly more cautious, sometimes uses the term “rite of transition” instead.⁴⁶ Walter Burkert, in his seminal article of 1966, was less given to this jargon, but both his title and his interpretation make it clear that he saw the rite against a backdrop of female initiation rites as well.⁴⁷ There was dissent, however, most recently in 1997 when Guy Donnay explicitly opposed to the initiatory reading what he termed as “a civic rite”, “un rite civique”.⁴⁸ His paper is vastly superior to Noel Robertson’s earlier and rather blunt opposition⁴⁹ insofar as Donnay very clearly recognizes the methodological problems, and he even terms his case “un cas d’école”. In the last chapter of his thoughtful paper, he addresses all the characteristics that in the orthodox reading pointed to initiation. Let me, for argument’s sake, pick them up.

- (i) Initiation rites confine the initiands for a given time in a closed space well away from the community. The *arrhephoroi*, Donnay says, were not excluded from the community during their service: they participated in other rituals, and they might have been visited by their relatives. The latter point, of course, is specious; we lack any evidence. The former is correct.
- (ii) Initiation rites introduce initiands into gender-specific tasks, hunting for males, cooking and weaving for females; the *arrhephoroi* were introduced into the latter. Donnay objects to this: they certainly did not do all the weaving; they just assisted the priestess of Athena in setting up the

weaving. This is a specious argument again: they were at least concerned with weaving – but it is certainly no introduction into the craft.

- (iii) Initiation rites confront the young with and introduce them into sexuality – not so the *arrhephoroi*. This is Donnay's most interesting argument. It rests on a specific understanding of the key text in Pausanias' description of the Acropolis.⁵⁰ When talking about the *arrhephoroi*, Pausanias begins the description of how the two girls ended their service with a topographical remark: "There is in the city (*en tēi polēi*)⁵¹ a sanctuary, not far from the so-called Aphrodite in the Gardens, and through to it a natural subterranean descent". The girls, that is, descend not to the sanctuary of Aphrodite in the Gardens, they descend to a sanctuary whose name Pausanias does not reveal and which some scholars understood as being a sanctuary of Herse.⁵² It is unclear what Herse's role in this rite is – there is no necessary connection with Aphrodite, not even "by allusion" (Pierre Brulé), or because of the proximity of the sanctuary of Aphrodite (V. Pierrenne-Delforge). The argument, furthermore, relies heavily on the age of the girls. Ancient sources give it as between seven and eleven years – is this too early for an introduction into sexuality? If this is determined by the date of menarche, one would think so; but the evidence is not very reliable. There is finally the etiological myth of how the Cecropids jumped off the acropolis after having opened the forbidden casket that contained the baby Erichthonios in the guise of a snake: since Erichthonios was the result of a rather strange sexual act – Hephaestus' premature ejaculation – it was tempting to use it in this context.⁵³ But on the surface at least, the myth does not talk about sexuality, it talks about curiosity towards Athena. If nothing else points to sexuality, it is somewhat specious to adduce the myth as the main testimony.
- (iv) Initiation concerns an entire age group. They were only two *arrhephoroi*. This has been tackled already by earlier scholars: Brelich and Burkert pointed out that there are a few other Greek cases, where initiation is done by proxy only, like the two girls dedicated to Coan Athena or the two Locrian maidens.⁵⁴ But both parallel cases are Greek: this again is either specious or circular.

Thus, one of the four points Donnay makes (iii) is correct, (iv) is doubtful; in one case the evidence is ambiguous (ii), the fourth is specious argumentation (i): Donnay thus seems quite right to consider the Athenian *arrhephoria* rite as not fitting into any anthropological template for initiation.

Donnay's alternative, "a civic rite", is plausible enough at first glance: the girls selected come from the leading families, their duties addressed the goddess central to Athenian civic cult, Athena Polias, and their families were proud enough to put up honorary statues of the girls after termination of the office. But it is no real alternative, not even in its utter vagueness: every superficial reading of anthropological reports shows the importance initiation

cults had for a community: we deal not with a private change of status only but with much more. Still, the term “civic rite” even in its clumsiness points to a further problem.

In the widespread Greek case of rites like the *arrhephoria*, already Brelich proposed to talk not about “initiation rites”, but about “rites with an initiatory background” or “rites developed out of an initiatory context”.⁵⁵ This sounds fine – but if we use this language, we have to be conscious that we adopt a historical and evolutionary explanation for those rites. This means two things. First, we are implying a historical hypothesis: the family resemblance has its reason in a historical origin and development, as was true in the linguistic analogy: there must have been, in the past of Greece, tribal initiation rites out of which the rituals of archaic and classical Greece evolved.⁵⁶ This leads, if one does not simply prefer to keep away altogether, into the rather murky business of reconstructing such a ritual past. Rites, though, rarely do leave material traces: the reconstruction relies on narratives and, in rare cases, images, with all the dangers inherent.⁵⁷ Second, when such a diachronical claim becomes the main characteristic of the rite, the synchronic function of the rite in its society is neglected. And here, Donnay’s term “civic rite” becomes interesting, since it at least has the merit of trying to describe a synchronic function, albeit in the vaguest terms. In the case of the two *arrhephoroi*, it would be ludicrous to pretend that they were undergoing an initiation rite on behalf of all Athenian girls: the function of an initiation rite is to construct gendered adult beings, and every young individual has to be constructed in this way. There are no proxies in initiation rites: she or he who is not initiated will remain in the social marginality of a child or an animal.

This seems the crucial difference, where family resemblance ends. The one central function Gilbert Lewis, among others, ascribed to the rite,⁵⁸ is entirely given up; the rite is no longer concerned with “successful growth and development of the individual” group members. Being an *arrhephoros* made two upper-class girls every year more successful in the race for status, to judge from the inscriptions of their parents, and the same might hold true for the two Locrian girls, if they survived the travel. Even the long drawn out process of the Spartan *agôgê* might stretch the concept,⁵⁹ as does the Athenian *ephebeia* with its combination of religious duties and military service;⁶⁰ that does not mean that these institutions are related, phenomenologically or historically, to initiation rites.

One conclusion thus seems unavoidable. The term “initiation rite” or its synonyms “puberty rite” and the even much vaguer “rite of transition” have to be used very sparingly indeed when dealing with Greece. I prefer a terminology that allows a discussion with social anthropology, and I am very much in favor of a subtle and a differentiated analysis of functions. Thus, I would be willing to accept the Cretan rites under this stricter definition: here, it looks as if any son of a free-born citizen had to undergo the famous stay in

the wilderness, although social stratification makes itself felt in the fact that some sons of prominent fathers were accorded the lead position; the same holds true for the scanty evidence we have for Arcadian rites, and for Peloponnesian girls' dances. But then, I would stop. The Spartan *agôgê*, I am confident with Jeanmaire and others, developed out of the background we still sense in Crete, but then moved away into a terribly efficient military training. It is an "initiation rite" only when we adopt a rather loose terminology. For the rest of the Greek world, the term is a guess about an evolution, at its best, and a stance in debate about the prehistory of the Athenian *ephebêia* before Lycurgus.

Is there, then, another term that we could use to designate those collective rites of adolescents of both genders that are unmistakably attested in most Greek states? A term employed sometimes is "rituals of coming of age". It has the advantage of being nicely descriptive, and the disadvantage of being somewhat passive: rituals like the *ephebêia* involve the young men in many activities and intend to transform them actively by exposing them to the religious traditions and training them in athletics. Still, it moves away from initiation and might therefore be preferable.

The myths

What about initiation myths? Their existence is even less debated than that of initiation rites; they formed some part of Brelich's investigation, and the myths of girls' initiations were treated by Ken Dowden in his *Death and the Maiden*.⁶¹ But "initiation myths" are a rather loose category that can be subdivided into three subgroups. The first subgroup contains myths that are etiologies for still existing rites that we, too, would call initiatory. The second subgroup concerns myths that are still paired with a ritual whose initiatory character, however, has been transformed into something else. In the third subgroup are myths that, in the ancient documentation, are not connected with rituals at all but that are being read by modern scholars as having an initiatory background. This background, then, belongs to the prehistory of these myths. Most of the myths discussed by Dowden belong in this group from which he reconstructs Mycenaean girls' initiations.⁶²

The first subgroup seems rather straightforward since the rite that goes together with the myth has a clear initiatory function in the society that tells the myth. But there are not many myths that can make this claim; they mostly belong to Sparta or Crete. A case in point is the myth of the girl Leukippe whom Leto transformed into the young man Leukippos. It is the etiological story for a festival in the cult of Leto at Phaistos on Crete, the Ekdysia, and a ritual performed during the wedding night in this same sanctuary.⁶³ Our knowledge of the festival is limited to the name. Its etymology – "Festival of Undressing" – connects it with the ritual nudity and change of dress typical for initiation rites, general knowledge of Cretan society argues for the

existence of such rites among the island communities, and Ephorus reports that marriage – to which the one ritual we know of belongs – was celebrated in Crete at the end of the ritualized period that marked the transition from adolescent to man. The mythic theme of gender change, furthermore, belongs to adolescent male ideology connected with such rites. Thus, there is enough circumstantial evidence to allow the conclusion that in the story of Leukippos we deal with an initiatory myth. But there are problems even here, and they concern the rite: not every ritual that has an unequivocal initiatory function goes back to a distant past. A well-known case concerns Sparta. There is wide agreement with Robertson Smith's thesis that the ritual fustigation of adolescent boys in the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia is part of an initiatory scenario; the rite even has the cruel character that tribal initiations led one to expect.⁶⁴ But it also has become clear that the flagellation rite is the result of a transformation that happened during the Hellenistic age: late classical authors describe it differently, as a mock battle between two age groups, one of which tried to steal cheese from the altar of the goddess, the other defended the altar.⁶⁵ The myth that insists on bloodshed explains this late ritual and cannot be seen together with the earlier rite; fittingly enough, it is Pausanias who reports it. We have to accept that initiatory myths can be quite late, and that initiatory rituals can look "genuine" and "archaic" only after a late reform.

The second subgroup is trickier to deal with: methodologically, we could come close to a circular reading when explaining a non-initiatory ritual as a later transformation of an initiation rite by using its etiological myth. A good example is the case of the Locrian maidens.⁶⁶ In historical times, the Locrians sent annually two maidens from the leading families to the sanctuary of Athena Ilias at Troy. The myth explains it as atonement for the rape of Cassandra by the Locrian Ajax in the temple of Athena. Angered by this transgression of her sanctuary, Athena not only drowned Ajax, she also sent a plague to his descendants, the Locrians. In order to avert the plague, the Delphic oracle made the Locrians send every year two adolescent girls to the sanctuary of Athena at Troy; there, they served in a very low position. In its actual function, the rite certainly is no initiation rite; the task of these two girls has nothing to do with the general coming of age of Locrian girls, nor presumably with their own. Neither does the myth talk about initiation rites and the coming of age of Locrian girls. It talks about a purification or atonement rite and focuses on the fears of the girls (and of their parents) about a perilous voyage far away from home. At the same time, it gave the Locrians a ritual means of counteracting the infamous image their ancestor Ajax had in Homeric mythology. I still think that the cluster of motifs in both the myth and the ritual point to an initiatory prehistory; but this tells us virtually nothing about the function of the ritual in Hellenistic times.

The real challenge is the third subgroup, myths that are assumed to be initiatory but are without existing initiation rituals. What are the distinctive characteristics of these narrations that make them look like derivations from

an initiatory background? Let us look at two examples to better understand the mechanisms at work.

The narration of Theseus' Cretan adventure is an initiation myth.⁶⁷ It talks about the exploits of an adolescent prince who is sent out with a band of pubescent girls and boys; he is confronted with his real father, Poseidon, that is his identity (the story of his plunge into the sea) and with a deadly danger, rescued by a princess who at the same time initiates him into sexuality, and after his return he becomes the new king. The crucial items are first the tripartite structure that leads from departure via an experience of a marginality to the return; second the essential experience that takes place outside and far from the hero's home; third, the adolescent age of the hero and his introduction into sexuality and identity. The same structure and details apply for the myth of Jason and the Argonauts; the same background has been claimed here.⁶⁸

The myth of Iphigeneia in Aulis is an initiation myth.⁶⁹ It talks about the death of a nubile girl, which, in the end, transforms her into the patroness of mothers in childbirth. The death or transformation of a girl is found in several other stories (Callisto, Io, the daughters of Proetus), which have been labeled initiation myths by Dowden.⁷⁰

But both cases are more intricate than this. The story pattern of the Theseus myth is basically the pattern that Vladimir Propp isolated for his quest stories – in Walter Burkert's short summary: "the tale starts with some damage, lack, or desire (motifem 8)", the ransom asked by Minos for killing his son; "the hero is told to go somewhere (9) and agrees to do so (10); he leaves home (11); he meets some being that puts him to a test (12); reacting to it (13), he receives some gift or magical aid (14)" – this would be Ariadne's gift; "he gets to the place required (15) and meets an adversary with whom he has to interact (16)" – the Minotaur in the labyrinth; "he is harmed in some way (17) but is victorious in the end (18)" – here, only the victory counts; "thus the initial damage is put right (19)" – the twice seven youths are released. "The hero begins his homeward journey (20), is pursued (21) but saved (22)". Here the Theseus story takes parts from the pattern until (31) "the hero becomes king"; this is not unusual with Propp's sequence – not all the motifemes have to be present.⁷¹

Burkert drew attention to another story type which he sequenced into five motifemes – (1) leaving home, (2) seclusion, (3) rape, (4) tribulation, (5) rescue and birth of a boy; he called it "the girl's tragedy".⁷² It is the pattern behind some of Dowden's myths, Kallisto for example or Io, while the Iphigeneia myth is more complex than that, but shares its structure with many other Greek girls' myths.⁷³ Scholars assumed initiation rituals behind both the quest sequence and the girl's tragedy – Dowden made an underlying Bronze Age ritual the unifying factor behind the stories and their patterning; Propp thought of prehistoric male initiation rites as the source for the quest pattern.⁷⁴

But in both cases the existence of the story pattern has a crucial consequence: once the pattern is established, we do not need any historical rites anymore. Any story can make use of the preexisting pattern, up to and including recent and contemporary narrations. The girl's tragedy looks decidedly like the plot of a Victorian novel, and most James Bond scripts conform easily to the quest pattern as well; no one would argue for an underlying initiation ritual there.

This leads to one more consequence (besides the obvious question, why these story patterns are so persistent, a question answered by Walter Burkert with an ethological explanation) – a consequence that concerns both the myths connected in our body of texts with initiation and those understood by scholarship as deriving from initiation rituals. First the latter: given the independent existence of the mythical pattern, the statement that a given myth derives from initiation does not speak so much about a hypothetical origin of a given myth, but about its function at a given time in the past. This function must leave clear traces: the myth cannot just concern an adolescent or young adult hero. The fact that Jason was described as a wearing one sandal only (*monosandalos*) is such an additional detail, as already Brelich pointed out;⁷⁵ the fact that Medea was first perceived as a divinity, which makes her resonant with the theme of the divine initiator, is another one.⁷⁶

But there is also a consequence for those myths that, in our sources, go together with what can be understood as an initiatory ritual. We cannot ever assume that this connection reflects a genetic link; the story might have been attached later in the history of the rite. Nor does a myth that we could call an initiatory myth define a later ritual as initiatory just because it accompanies it – the tie might be looser than that. Again the myth of Theseus is a case in point. In a fragmentary second century BC inscription, Theseus' exploits during the Cretan expedition as well as those during his return from Troezen were compared to the ephebic education: as an ephebe, Theseus is the paradigm of the ephebes who imitate him.⁷⁷ It would be rash to take this as an indication that the Athenian *ephêbeia* derives from or is an initiation rite. First, the entire career of Theseus seems to be compared: thus, we rather should say that the life of Theseus before his ascension to the throne of Athens is a role model for the young Athenian before his adoption of a fully adult position. Secondly, we know that the *ephêbeia* was reformed, perhaps radically, in the early fourth century by Lycurgus, and it is this later and reformed institution that is at play here, not a hypothetical initiatory institution.⁷⁸ During the two years of the *ephêbeia*, the ephebes “first go round the sanctuaries, then to the Piraeus where one group watches over Munychia, the other over Acte”, as Aristotle has it; the ephebic inscriptions of the third and second centuries give much more detail on their ritual duties. “At the end of the first year”, Aristotle continues, “they participate in an assembly in the theatre and demonstrate to the people their dexterity in military movements, then they get a shield and a spear and serve on the border posts”. Thus, it is not these details that are compared to

Theseus' career: it is their dedication to the service, and it is their social position between the status of a boy and that of an adult: like boys, "they are exempt from all taxes, and they cannot be called into court or begin a lawsuit themselves", as again Aristotle insists. It is this much vaguer parallelism that any Athenian in Hellenistic times could still feel and that explains the connection between myth and ritual.

An additional remark. Both story patterns, the quest and the girl's tragedy, easily fit the dynamic tripartition of a rite of passage – separation, liminality, and integration. Already Van Gennep, read carefully, had shown that the tripartition does apply to many more rites than just those of initiation and that the pattern is much wider than even the life-crisis rituals. The same tripartite sequence is present in the overall structure of traditional sacrifice,⁷⁹ and Victor Turner found it in Christian pilgrimages.⁸⁰ I would go further: stories that contain this sequence need not derive or belong to any rite at all, as an example can demonstrate. The myth with which Plutarch ends his essay on "God's Slowness to Punish" (*De sera numinis vindicta*) is modeled on Plato's myth of Er. But Plutarch departs from this model not only in many details, but also in the overall structure: he features a hero who undergoes a real rite of passage, that moves from separation via marginality to reintegration into a new status. The hero falls from a window and severely injures his neck which results in apparent death (Eliade would have adored this); during the time he doesn't seem alive, he is traveling to a faraway place, where he braves the dangers of the beyond, is introduced to traditional wisdom and given a new name (name-change is another feature of a rite of passage, to express a new status); and when he comes back, he takes up this new name and changes his entire life. Everybody agrees that this is Plutarch's invention, not the description of an initiatory rite. Thus, the tripartite sequence turns out to be a very basic narrative structure. Indeed, in the last resort, it reflects the intellectual dynamic of any process of cognition. We begin cognition by separating ourselves from the familiar and known, concentrate on the new and explore it, and finally come back filled with new insight. This fits the stories, because they all seem to talk about the gaining of identity, which in itself is an elementary cognitive process.

Conclusion

The concept of initiation arrived in the terminology of scholars of Greek religion from social anthropology and sociology.⁸¹ Despite its origin in Latin and the initial confusion between "rites of puberty" and "secret introduction rites" into a mystery cult that has to do with this origin, it was the former meaning that won the day and became one of the leading paradigms for understanding a large number of Greek rituals and myths, and it came to be used even for the interpretation of literary texts. The expansion was largely the result of a paradigm shift in the studies of antiquity that went together

with the general shift in Western societies in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The new paradigm replaced the fertility paradigm and moved from a focus on nature to a focus on society, and it brought classical scholars into new contacts with social anthropology, then a major player in the humanities. The result of this expansion was a watering down of the concept, comparable to the watering down of the concept of shamanism. In reality, there is no institution in any Greek city that would fully conform to the anthropological definition of initiation, with the exception of Crete and, in some respects, the Spartan *agôgê*. But compared to the function and form of initiation rituals in ethnological cultures, already the Cretan rituals changed, and even more so the Spartan ritual; still, the main function of these rites is to help the “successful growth and development of the individual”, individual being, in both cases, the male member of the free ruling class. In most other Greek cities – and more so in the course of time – such a function was taken over by other institutions and rituals, foremost among them public schools, while the critical transitions were marked by the interfamilial rites, like the dedication of the first beard or of a lock of hair to a specific, often kourotrophic deity. Former rituals of initiation were replaced by a civic festival cycle and lost any initiatory function they might have had in the past;⁸² thus, initiation is in most cases the result of an evolutionary hypothesis that cannot give any insight into synchronic functions. The same is true for mythology where the label “initiatory” indicates a hypothetical prehistoric function, at best, except in the few cases where a ritual that has an initiatory function is combined with an etiological myth. In dealing with mythic narratives, but also with rituals, interpretation often focused in the tripartite structure that was seen as common for “rites of passage” as an indication of an initiatory background. But not every passage rite is initiatory, and the tripartite structure is much too basic to be helpful.

Given all this, the usefulness of initiation as an explanatory paradigm for a large area of ancient religion and culture is questionable. The paradigm should be used only for rituals (and myths) that do correspond both in form and in function to the function and the form that initiation rites have in archaic societies. As in many other cases, the study of ancient religion imported a paradigm that is based on actual social institutions in a small number of societies; and as always in such a case, the gain from this import is counterbalanced by a dimming of the focus and a concomitant loss of explanatory strength. The more eyes use the same glasses, the fuzzier their focus has to become.

Notes

- 1 Robert A. Heinlein, *Time Enough for Love* (1973) 335.
- 2 Lafitau (1724) 281–349.
- 3 His diffusionism relied, of course, on the Bible, esp. Genesis 11, as were all the

diffusionist theories of language before Franz Bopp, for which see *inter alia* Olender (1989).

- 4 The acts: Moreau (1992). See also the even vaster congress reported in Ries (1986) whose papers cover the topic on a global scale, from Africa to ancient Mesopotamia and Greece and to contemporary Islam and Christianity, in the wake of Mircea Eliade to whose work the first contribution (Julien Ries, “L’homme, le rite e l’initiation selon Mircea Eliade”, pp. 13–26) was dedicated.
- 5 Livy 39.8–19.
- 6 Varro, *De ling. Lat.* 5.59 (Samothrace) and *Rust.* 3.1.5 (Eleusis); Cic. *Legg.* 2.36. The verb *initiare* is as old as Terence, *Phormio* 49 (presumably Eleusis); the participle *initiatei* translates the Greek *memuemenoi* in a Samothracian inscription of the mid-second century BC (?), *SEG* 29.799. Since the verb presupposes the noun, these two passages show that *initia* as the Latin term for Greek *mustéria* predates Varro and Cicero by at least a century.
- 7 Suetonius *Nero* 34.4 (the prohibition of *initiatio* of murderers, see Isocrates *Or.* 4.157 who uses *teletê*). Seneca uses *initiamentum* in the same sense albeit metaphorically (*Epist.* 90.28).
- 8 Frazer (1911–1915), Part VII 2.225–278. The same insistence on the theme of death and rebirth in puberty initiations is noted by others, e.g. Preuss (1933) and, of course, Eliade (1958), who transfers it to the mystery rites as well; for a protest, see Burkert (1987) 99–101.
- 9 Van Gennep (1909), 93–163 (“on examinera les rites d’initiation de toute ordre, c’est-à-dire non seulement celles qui donnent accès aux classes d’âge et aux sociétés secrètes, mais celles aussi qui accompagnent l’ordination du prêtre et du magicien, l’intrônisation du roi, la consécration des moines et des nonnes, celle des prostituées sacrées, etc.” p. 94).
- 10 Mauss and Hubert (1909) 144. Schurtz, Webster and Hubert-Mauss are cited by Harrison (1927), 19 n. 1, together with Van Gennep, L. Lévy-Bruhl “and especially” Frazer’s chapter in *Balder the Beautiful*, see note 8.
- 11 She herself feels obliged to W. R. Halliday for partial inspiration, see Harrison (1927) 22 n. 3; Halliday in turn followed Frazer, see Allen *et al.* (1936) 158.
- 12 West (1965) provides a thorough rendition with commentary; it is still the best text.
- 13 Harrison (1927) 16; the emphasis is Harrison’s, I have to insist.
- 14 Lang (1913) vol. 1, 270–8.
- 15 Lang seems a mere antiquarian compared to Harrison; perceptions like these must have helped to spread her fame, certainly aided by her genius of self-propagation, which Beard (2000) admirably works out.
- 16 Murray (1912), see (1925) 46–8.
- 17 Reprinted in Gernet (1968) 154–71.
- 18 Brelich (1969) 46. Burkert (1977) 391 arrives at a similar conclusion (“In den alten Hochkulturen . . . bleiben Stammesinitiationen nur in Relikten erhalten”); see also Brelich (1961b). One reason for the neglect of this seminal book must be what its author described as: “Il volume appartiene indubbiamente alla categoria dei libri di non facile lettura, ai limiti dell’illeggibilità.” This might help explain why nobody ever translated it. But Brelich, who had Raffelle Pettazoni’s prestigious chair in History of Religion in Rome but focused his research on Greece and Rome, is still underrated outside Italy – as an introduction to this splendid scholar and complex personality, one should read his *Storia delle religioni: perché?* (Naples: Liguori 1979).

- 19 Vidal-Naquet (1968); an Italian version (“amendée”), “Il cacciatore nero,” in Detienne (1975) 53–72. 245–52; a new version (“très remanié”) in Vidal-Naquet (1981/1991), 151–75; another look is “Retour au chasseur noir,” in Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet (1989/1992) 215–51.
- 20 Calame (1977).
- 21 His book was reprinted in 1969, after being translated into English in 1960 (University of Chicago Press); see also the contemporary scholarly interest in his work, as manifested by Belmont (1974), Centlivres and Hainard (1981), Anttonen (1992) and Belier (1994).
- 22 See esp. Sourvinou-Inwood (1988) and (1990); Bremmer (1978) and (1994) 44–5; Lincoln (1976) and (1981a); Calame (1977); Winkler (1985); and Graf (1978) and (1997a).
- 23 See the way Lincoln (1991) talks about the way initiation functions: “In human initiation, it is nothing else than social pressure that effects the transformation” (p. 111); “the community at large is authorized to pound and coax the flesh of another woman . . . into a desirable shape” (ibid.); “initiators can persuade initiands not only that the established, hegemonic ideas and values of their society are valid, proper, noble, and worthy, but further that one ought shape one’s life and one’s self in accordance with them” (ibid.).
- 24 Harrison (1927) 22.
- 25 Frobenius looms large in Jeanmaire (1939) 147–223 (“Rites d’éphébie et classes d’âge dans l’Afrique contemporain”).
- 26 While Parry had already published his main findings in the 1930s, his oral Homer made a popular impact much later, esp. with Lord (1960) and Kirk (1962). *Homo Necans* (= Burkert [1972]), was rather ignored in Germany, and it was the excellent English translation by Peter Bing (= Burkert [1983]), with the somewhat more ambitious subtitle *The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth* that really started its career.
- 27 This subversive value is still very much to the fore in Dacosta (1991), who somewhat naively insists on the centrality of “l’enseignement initiatique”, initiatory teaching in Greek religion before the take-over by the Christians. By doing so, he explicitly reacts to the paradigms current in the contemporary history of Greek religion.
- 28 Eliade (1958); the title of the paperback edition, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (1965) clarifies the aim further. It is interesting to note that the ideology of death and rebirth defined initiation rites even for Brelich (1969), to the extent that he erroneously ascribes (136 n. 65) to Nilsson the observation that the Spartans did not have initiation rites because he could not find this ideology; Nilsson (1912) 324 only states that he could not find the initiatory hardship (“die schmerzvolle Probe . . . krasse Bräuche und rohe Verstümmelungen”) in historical Sparta.
- 29 Eliade (1951). Shamanism had already been introduced into classical studies, albeit marginally, by Karl Meuli (1937/1975) and made popular by Eric R. Dodds (1951). For the refutation, mostly by folklorists working on Northern Eurasian cultures, see the bibliography in Bremmer (1983) 48 n. 95 and (2001) 27–40.
- 30 M. Eliade, “L’initiation et le monde moderne”, in Bleeker (1965), 1–14. This pathos resonates also in the general papers in Ries (1986).
- 31 Anton Antweiler, “Religion als Einweihung”, in Bleeker (1965) 233–60: “Religion [ist] Einweihung in das Leben” (p. 259).
- 32 Eliade, in Bleeker (1965) 14 “La nostalgie pour les épreuves et les scénarios initiatiques, nostalgie déchiffrée dans tant d’œuvres littéraires et plastiques, révèle le désir de

- l'homme moderne d'un renouvellement définitif et totale, d'une *renovatio* qui puisse transmuier l'existence". On Eliade's ideological positions, see esp. Wasserstrom (1999).
- 33 Wasserstrom (1999).
- 34 Moreau (1992). Volume 1 has the subtitle *Les rites d'adolescence et les mystères*, volume 2: *L'acquisition d'un savoir ou d'un pouvoir. Le lieu initiatique. Parodies et perspectives*.
- 35 Houston (1992).
- 36 There are some inscriptions that use *telein* in order to talk about a priest's initiation; they all come from Cos, and give us no further hint about the ritual, see Sokolowski (1969) nos. 160, 166, 167. In late Bronze Age Pylos, the term *mujomeno* (Greek *muomenos*), might refer to the king's initiation; see Gérard-Rousseau (1968) 146–7.
- 37 The one exception is Bremmer (1994) 44.
- 38 Lewis (1980) 205.
- 39 Brelich (1969) ch. 1. The scholarly illusion of uniformity again is very much a consequence of Eliade's theories.
- 40 For the *mallokeuria* see Montserrat (1991) and Legras (1993).
- 41 Hatzopoulos (1994).
- 42 M. Bile, in Moreau (1992), 11–18.
- 43 The arguments are conveniently assembled in Bremmer and Horsfall (1987) 38–43.
- 44 Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1931) vol. 1.10 "Ich verstehe die Sprachen nicht, aus denen die zur Zeit beliebten Wörter, Tabu und Totem, Mana und Orenda, entlehnt sind, halte es aber auch für einen zulässigen Weg, mich an die Griechen zu halten und über Griechisches griechisch zu denken." I suspect that this attitude was another reason that the initiation paradigm did not make its impact in classical studies before the late 1960s when the field generally became open again for outside paradigms; Harrison's *Themis* had come too late to make an impact, since with the end of World War I classical studies firmly shut down its former openness for many decades to come. Harrison's move away from Greece to Russian studies is symptomatic.
- 45 Versnel (1993a).
- 46 Jeanmaire (1939) 264–8, Brelich (1969) 231–8, Brulé (1987), 79–123, and Sourvinou-Inwood (1988).
- 47 Burkert (1966) 1–25.
- 48 Donnay (1997).
- 49 Robertson (1983).
- 50 Pausanias 1.27.3. Brulé (1987) 79–98 and Pirenne-Delforge (1994) 51 discuss the widely divergent scholarly opinions on the topographical problems.
- 51 The words *entēi polēi* more likely refer to the city, not the acropolis: in 1.26.6 he explicitly remarks that "what is now called *acropolis*, was formerly called *polis*"; and this after having used the term *polis* for the entire city.
- 52 Thus *inter alia* Pirenne-Delforge (1994) 56.
- 53 See Pirenne-Delforge (1994) 59.
- 54 Cos: Hesych. s.v. *agretai*; *Greek Inscriptions of the British Museum* 4.2 no. 968.8; Locrian maidens Graf (1978).
- 55 See esp. Brelich (1961b).
- 56 Brelich (1969) is very clear about this, esp. in his reflections about Athens at pp. 290–8; see also Bremmer (1994) 44.
- 57 Bader (1980) relies on narratives for reconstructing an initiatory background to the stories about Nestor's youth, while Marinatos (1984) ingeniously reads pictorial evidence.

- 58 Lewis (1980) 205.
- 59 It is interesting to note that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, Nilsson (1912) – reprinted as (1952) 826–8 – noted, after others, the closeness of many Spartan institutions (including the *agôgê*) to ethnological material, but insisted on the transformation the primitive institutions underwent in order to become “cornerstones of the Spartan political organization” (“Ecksteine des spartanischen Staatsorganismus”; the citation is from p. 340/868), not the least because he could not find a specific initiation ritual (“das bei den primitiven Völkern der Kernpunkt ist . . . , die Männer- oder Jünglingsweihe”), and he theorized that “Die Spartaner haben also die Jünglingsweihe fallen lassen,” not the least because the *agôgê* took such a long time (p. 324/847).
- 60 See the description in Aristotle *Constitution of the Athenians* 42.2–5 with Pelekidis (1962) and, for the epigraphical evidence, Reinmuth (1971).
- 61 Dowden (1989).
- 62 Dowden (1989).
- 63 Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 17; see esp. Leitaó (1995) and Waldner (2000), 222–42.
- 64 Robertson Smith (1894) 150–1. See, *inter alia*, Brelich (1969) 127–42; Vernant (1984); Graf (1985), 86–90; Lebessi (1991); and Bonnechère (1993). Nilsson (1912) 324, however, refused to read the flagellation in this light, but he followed the fertility reading given by Ada Thomsen.
- 65 Xenophon, *Constitution of the Spartans* 2.9; Plato, *Laws* 633b; the flagellation is mentioned for the first time in Cicero *Tusc.* 2.34. For the correct evaluation of this situation see Herbert J. Rose, in Dawkins *et al.* (1929) 405.
- 66 Testimonies and scholarly literature in Graf (1978).
- 67 See esp. Jeanmaire (1939) 227–383 and (with much more sophistication) Calame (1990) 68–139.
- 68 Brelich (1959) and Graf (1997a); but see Johnston (1997) 50–2.
- 69 Dowden (1989) 9–48.
- 70 See Dowden (1989) 71–95 (for the Proitids), 117–45 (for Io) and 182–91 (for Kallisto).
- 71 Propp (1928); Burkert (1979) 5–6.
- 72 Burkert (1979) 6–7; see Larson (1995) 89–90.
- 73 Johnston (1999) ch. 6.
- 74 Dowden (1989) and Propp (1949).
- 75 Brelich (1955/57).
- 76 Graf (1997a).
- 77 *IG II²* no. 2291a 41.
- 78 See Aristotle *Constitution of the Athenians* 42.4, with Pelekidis (1962) 113ff.
- 79 Most explicitly Van Straten (1995) 9.
- 80 Turner and Turner (1978).
- 81 To a much lesser degree, this is true for the scholarship on Roman religion; see esp. Torelli (1984).
- 82 Brelich (1969) follows a series of festivals back to their initiatory background; Burkert (1972) 108–19 does so for the Olympic games.

Part II

FEMALE INITIATIONS

WHAT KIND OF RITE OF PASSAGE WAS THE ANCIENT GREEK WEDDING?

Gloria Ferrari

It is difficult to determine precisely in which ways rites of initiation differ from other rituals in which Van Gennep recognized the tripartite schema that marks a rite of passage. Van Gennep's chapter on initiations drew upon the work of Webster on secret societies and particularly Heinrich Schurtz's study of age class societies and *Männerbunde* – the Greek *polis* ("city-state") among them.¹ If I were compelled to draw up a list of particular features of these rites on that basis, I would point to the following: an initiation involves integration into a group of like persons; it marks a profound change in the individual; and it is irreversible. That is, a priest who has been defrocked remains a defrocked priest and cannot go back to being a novice. The same may be said perhaps of other rites of passage, but is it true of betrothal and marriage? The idea that marriage is an initiation of sorts has been in the air for some time. Long before Vernant's quotable phrase that "marriage is to a girl what war is to a boy",² the analogy between the coming of age of the young men on the one hand, and the marriage of girls occurs insistently in ancient sources. In the Demosthenic speech against Neaera, to give just one example, the speaker projects the admission of sons into the phratries and their inscription in the demes, on the one hand, and the giving of daughters in marriage as parallel, equivalent events, by which both girls and boys take their place in society.³ This is, of course, a false symmetry, which scholars from Van Gennep to Brelich and beyond have explained away by pointing to the self-evident fact that "the social activity of a woman is much simpler than that of a man."⁴ That is to say, marriage is as much of an initiation as a woman can accomplish. Support for the idea that marriage is an initiation has been found in the conceit, commonplace in Greek culture, that the death of an unwed maiden is a wedding in Hades or to Hades himself.⁵ The resemblance of certain features of the *ekdosis* (the "giving out" of the bride) to features of funerals have been stressed: the body is washed and dressed, it changes residence, accompanied by song and by torchlight, and both ceremonies

involve feasts. These similarities – admittedly shared by other rites – have been explained by the hypothesis that the wedding produces in the woman an irreversible change and, as much as the funeral in the case of the corpse, it seals her incorporation in a new community. In brief, both weddings and funerals are initiations of sorts. But again this is a false symmetry, for although the funeral is an irreversible initiation rite, it remains to be seen precisely what kind of a transition a Greek wedding is.

The pledging and giving out of brides

What are we to make of a large body of evidence that stresses the impermanence of the marital union, the fact that the woman is denied full integration into the group to which she is now attached, and the fugitive character of female adulthood? I will now try to bring to the fore these ideas about marriage and womanhood, on the basis of the city-state about which we are best informed, Athens. What I have to say concerns the metaphors, which inform the Athenian conception of the wedding, that are embedded in legal formulas, ritual actions, and representations of marriage in poetry and visual representations.

The fundamental facts about marriage in archaic and classical Athens are generally agreed upon.⁶ One distinguishes two important moments, which Redfield characterized as a transaction and a transformation, respectively:⁷ the *engûê*, generally translated as betrothal; and the *ekdosis*, or formal transferal of the bride to the groom. The *engûê* was what distinguished the legitimate wife (*damar* or *gunê gametê*) from the concubine (*pallakê*) by endowing a woman with the capacity to produce children who in time would be citizens, as we learn from a law cited by Demosthenes, and attributed to Solon by some:⁸ “(she) whom father or brother or grandfather pledges or gives by *engûê*, from this woman are born legitimate children (*gnêsious*).” The marriage might follow immediately after the *engûê* or at a distance of time.⁹ The *ekdosis* is the occasion for elaborate rituals, lasting several days, three at least. On the day when the bride was given to the groom, the *anakalyptêria*, there would be a banquet for the two families and friends, normally at the bride’s house. At some point the bride would be “uncovered” or “unveiled” and honored with gifts. The transport from the house of her father or guardian (*kurios*) to that of her husband took place in the evening by the light of torches. In her new residence more ritual marked the entrance of the bride in the husband’s *oikos* (“household”): the eating of a special food, a quince or pomegranate, and the showering of the pair with a basketful of dried fruits and nuts. With the consummation of the marriage began cohabitation.

There has been considerable debate in the past hundred years as to which of these actions meets a juridical definition of marriage.¹⁰ At no point in the procedure was there a moment at which the bride consented to the marriage. The only step that had legal consequences was the *engûê*, for which not even

her presence was required. The *engûê* insured the status of children, which might be born, should the parties involved actually ever enter into cohabitation.¹¹ But a woman thus promised might never be given away. The non-binding quality of the *engûê*, coupled with the fact that no other part of the procedure was in itself constitutive of marriage in the legal sense, leads one to conclude with MacDowell that “the legal difference between *engûê* and *gamos* was, roughly, that *engûê* was making a contract and *gamos* was carrying it out.”¹²

From the facts of the matter, I now turn to the poetic qualities of legal formulas, to consider first the *ekdosis* and then the *engûê*. In the case of the Athenian wedding, the proceedings are governed by a basic metaphor of commercial transaction, out of which spins a series of interrelated metaphors that are employed in rituals and in literary imagery.

What we call giving away the bride is expressed in epic with the simple verb “to give” (*didonai*). In classical Athens *didonai* may again be used, as it is, for instance in Menander’s use of the formula, in which, with affected primitivism, the bride is “given” for the plowing.¹³ But the technical term for the conveyance of the bride is *ekdosis* and the verb *ekdidonai*, literally “to give out”, as it used, for instance by Isaeus, where the speaker’s mother’s legitimacy is demonstrated by the facts that she was “given out” (*ekdotheisan*) by her father, as well as being “pledged” (*egguêtheisan*) by him.¹⁴ Wolff demonstrated in 1944 that *ekdosis* is the term used of the lease in contracts for “a transfer which [...] conferred title upon a transferee, but at the same time reserved a right for the transferor.”¹⁵ In this sense it is employed of objects of contracts for work, of slaves handed over for questioning by torture in lawsuits. In papyri it refers to the handing over of the baby to the wet nurse, and of an apprentice to a master. In Xenophon’s tract on horsemanship, for instance, *ekdidonai* is used both of giving one’s son out as an apprentice and of entrusting a colt to a trainer (*On Horsemanship* 2.2). The *ekdosis*, that is, is not a gift of the bride to the groom, but a conditional lease for the expressed purpose of producing children, who will be citizens. The metaphor is apt. Her natal family never totally relinquished its control over a married woman and the dowry that went with her, both of which might revert to it for a variety of reasons.¹⁶ We are best informed about cases in which a married woman came into an inheritance, becoming *epiklêros* (“heiress”) and could be, and was claimed by her nearest male relatives on her father’s side.¹⁷ A man would divorce his wife to marry an *epiklêros*. But marriages could be terminated for no particular reason and there is general agreement that divorce was easily obtained, although there is debate on how frequently it actually occurred.¹⁸ To this add the married woman did not become part of her husband *ankhistheia*, the group of kin with rights of inheritance.¹⁹ She remained, in a real sense, a stranger in the house.

No less than *ekdosis*, *engûê* is used for a range of commercial transactions that require a guarantee, or the establishment of securities.²⁰ One pledges himself as surety in the middle voice, and the thing which is pledged is the *engûê*, a sum

of money in the case envisaged in Demosthenes' speech against Apaturius, who, had Demosthenes truly become guarantor (*enguêmenos*) for Parmeno, would surely have demanded the sum guaranteed (*enguên*) at once (33.24). The word is also used for posting bail, as in the case of the law introduced by Timocrates, cited by Demosthenes: sureties were established for the payment of bail money (24.40). One understands the relationship between the two meanings of the word intuitively to mean that the future bride is pledged.

The noun *enguê* and the verb *enguan* contain an image, upon which the understanding of the procedure of *enguê* and of its import rests. Since antiquity that figure has been reconstructed on the basis of a hypothetical etymological derivation of *enguê* from *guion*, the hand, the hollow or palm of the hand.²¹ This has led to seeing the *enguê* as a "handing over", which has taken two distinct forms. Wolff understood *enguan* to mean "to hand over" and *enguasthai* "to receive into one's hands". He explained the use of the same term for both guarantee and betrothal on the model of the Germanic contract of suretyship: "guarantee was contracted by handing over the debtor to the guarantor who was to exercise control for the purpose of keeping the debtor at the creditor's disposal."²² Accordingly, the bride would be placed in the groom's keep but kept at her father's disposal. This metaphor is inept in several obvious respects, the most important of which is that it is not at this stage that the bride is given to the groom. Gernet's explanation has won favor that the term originally meant a solemn promise made on behalf of the family group, rather than the transferal of an object or person. In his view, what is put in the hand is a pledge, signified by a handshake.²³ This rationalizes the metaphor implicit in *enguê*, but does not bring its focal image into focus. What is the thing that is placed in the hand? The fact of the matter is that in the *enguê* nothing changes hands, except, sometimes, the dowry.

According to Chantraine, the Greek words *guê*, *guia*, *gualon* constitute a group of terms that go back to the notion of "hollow", and "vault". "The concrete sense of the group, he writes, appears in the substantive *gualon*, which designates various kinds of "hollows".²⁴ This, I believe, is the image we are after.

Hesychius defines *guala* as store-rooms for treasure, treasuries, and hollows,²⁵ but *guala* may also be said of cups and of the canopy of heaven. What holds together these various meanings is the image of a hollow space as a container. A dominant image is that of the stony hollow and the cavern. In the *Hecale*, the great stone under which Aegeus places the sword and the boots for Theseus to find once he grows strong enough to lift it is a *gualon lithon*.²⁶ *Guala* may be valleys, such as the valleys of Pieria, which hold the tomb of Euripides, in an epigram by Ion.²⁷ In Pindar's *Nemean* 10, the Dioscuri, who share one life by spending each alternate day on earth and the other in Hades, are said to be in the caves of Therapne, *en gualois*, deep under the earth.²⁸ In Euripides' *Andromache* 1092–5, the underground caverns at Delphi are both caverns and treasury, they are caverns filled with gold: "See that man

who moves along the god's caverns (*guala*) filled with gold, treasure-houses (*thesaurous*) of mortals, who comes again with the same aims as he did when he came before, to sack the temple of Phoebus?" Here, as elsewhere, the sense of *gualon* is akin to that of English "vault". The sense of depositing something of value in the vault underlies the metaphoric use of *enguê* in the *Eumenides* 894–8, in the final exchange between Athena and the Furies, which is shot through with metaphors of commercial exchange:

CHORUS: Now suppose I have accepted. What reward (*timê*) is in store for me?

ATHENA: That no household shall flourish without you.

CHORUS: Will you bring this about, that such power be mine?

ATHENA: We shall raise the fortunes of the one who reveres you.

CHORUS: And will you lay in store for me the fund (*enguên these*) of all time to come?

To Athena's offer of hospitality the chorus replies by asking what their compensation will be – *timê*, a word that means "honor" but also "reward" and "price." Athena promises to augment the fortunes of those who hold them in awe. When the chorus ask if this will be forever, they use the expression *enguên these*, will you set, lay down, or deposit, as in a bank, an *enguê* of all the time to come?

I believe that the image of laying valuables in store in a vault, or an underground vault, is the one that structures the sense of *enguê* as "deposit", one that suits its use both as guarantee and betrothal. I should make it clear that this is not a matter of tracing the etymology of the word, but of recovering the vehicle of the metaphor that shapes the very concept of *enguê*.²⁹ For an understanding of the way in which *enguê* and *ekdosis* follow one another as stages of one and the same process, I rely on Benveniste's explanation of the peculiar semantic development connecting the expressions for hiding, burying, on the one hand, and giving out and lending, on the other, in Gothic.³⁰ While *filban* means "to hide, to withdraw from sight", corresponding to Greek *kruptein*, *ana-filban*, equivalent to Greek *ekdidosthai*, means "to give out", "to lease", "to farm out". The German practice of burying resources and valuables, Benveniste reasoned, underlies the idea that goods that may be leased are buried treasure, which is unearthed at the moment of conveyance. What comes into play – not surprisingly – is the image of the bride as treasure.³¹ The fact that the female is "spoken for" is cast in the figure of capital withdrawn from circulation and placed in the vault, from which she will be taken out when the moment comes to hand her over to the groom. As well as the contractual partnership of two men in the production of children for the state, the *enguê* then marks the beginning of the woman's rite of passage, the stage of separation.

The anakaluptêria

The poetic force of the metaphor of the bride as buried treasure informs the next phase of the marriage ritual. An important phase of the *gamos* ("wedding") was the *anakaluptêria*, which is mentioned for the first time in a fragment of the cosmogony of Pherekydes of Syros, to be considered shortly. Most of our information, however, comes from later sources, which explain that, on that occasion, the bride was "uncovered". The idea took shape long ago that the play of concealment and revelation that the word implies was acted out through a formal unveiling of the bride. There is now general agreement that the term was "used for both the ceremonial unveiling of the bride before the bridegroom and also for the gifts given by the groom to the bride immediately following this unveiling,"³² but one should note that *anakaluptêria* never means an act of unveiling.³³ The term was used to designate *the day* on which the bride was "uncovered", or "unveiled", for the groom to see, and also for *the gifts* she received on that day from the groom, relatives, and friends.³⁴ The lexicographers give *theôrêtra* and *optêria* as synonyms, both signifying seeing, as well as *prospthentêria*, which emphasizes the fact that the bridegroom addressed the bride.³⁵ The singular *anakaluptêrion* signified the moment when the bride was brought out, on the third day, as well as a gift given on that occasion.³⁶ Debate continues over the place occupied by the unveiling in the sequence of events that constituted the wedding ceremony, but a few points seem secure.³⁷ One source specifies that the bride was uncovered at the wedding feast for the husband and guests to see.³⁸ Since that was the moment in which she first became visible, the bride's uncovering must have taken place before the couple's voyage to the husband's house, on foot or by wagon.³⁹

Reasonable as it seems, the hypothesis that there was a ceremonial unveiling runs into difficulties, in part because it is difficult to decide what form the veiling took, in part because not every unveiling is an *anakaluptêrion*. We have literary and visual evidence to the effect that the bride was well-covered during and after the banquet. A caricature of the procession on a classical Athenian pyxis shows her entirely wrapped, for example.⁴⁰ Lucian (*Symposium* 8) writes of the strictly veiled bride at her own wedding feast. And a metaphor in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, 1178–9, which is sometimes brought forward in support of the unveiling,⁴¹ seems to say precisely the opposite. In that passage, Cassandra says: "no longer will my prophecy peek out from under veils, like a newly wedded bride (*neogamou numphês dikên*)". The *neogamos numphê* is the bride, but the bride just married, not the bride-to-be. In addition, the newly wedded bride's mantle, or veil, figures prominently in representations of the marriage procession, whether by chariot or on foot, in archaic and classical art. On Athenian black-figure vases it is a richly woven affair that she wears drawn over her head and holds out to shield her left cheek, in a distinctive flourish that is in part a display of decorum and in part sheer

display. In kind, the “bridal gesture” as it is called, is an exaggeration of the act of veiling oneself, which is performed by all persons possessed of *aidós*.⁴² Thetis holds this pose standing in the chariot, surrounded by the gods,⁴³ but even the protagonist of the Amasis Painter’s modest wedding by mule cart parades her oversized mantle with ostentation.⁴⁴ The bridal gesture is rare on late archaic and classical Athenian vases, but the mantle is no less in evidence. When the procession is on foot, attention is drawn to it by the fussy gesture of an attendant, the *nymphentria*, who follows the bride as the pair approach the marriage chamber, adjusting the way the mantle falls on her head, or on her neck and shoulders.⁴⁵ On a black-figure tripod-pyxis of the early fifth century, for instance, is the picture of the cortege arriving at the newlyweds’ *thalamos* (“wedding chamber”). This is the wedding of Heracles and Hebe, and behind Hebe the woman arranging the bride’s mantle may be Aphrodite.⁴⁶ On the skyphos by Makron, it is indeed Aphrodite who arranges Helen’s mantle, as the latter is led away by Paris, as though a bride.⁴⁷

Evidence of the importance of the bride’s mantle is not limited to vase-paintings. From the sanctuary of Persephone at Locri come series of votive terracotta plaques decorated with subjects related to the marriage of Persephone and Hades. These include one series depicting a cortege bringing the mantle, which lays folded upon a tray, and a deep cup.⁴⁸ The mantle is at center stage on the metope from the temple of Hera at Selinus, which represents a marriage of divinities, probably Zeus and Hera.⁴⁹ The god, seated, grasps the bride’s wrist in the traditional gesture of marriage. She stands before him, framed by the great mantle. The display of the mantle characterizes Hera among the gods on the East frieze of the Parthenon, advertising the fact that she is the “lawfully wedded wife” (*kouridiê alochos*) of Zeus. Does this gesture signify the ritual unveiling at the *anakaluptêria*? Twice in literary imagery the figure indeed marks the moment at which the bride meets the groom. In a fragment of Euphorion, the city of Thebes is said to be the *anakaluptêrion* (here: “wedding gift”) of Zeus to Persephone, “when she was about to see her husband for the first time, turning aside the cover of her nuptial mantle.”⁵⁰ Centuries later, Philostratus describes a painting of Pelops and his bride Hippodamia in the chariot, “she arrayed in nuptial attire, uncovering her cheek, now that she has won the right to a husband” (*Imagines* 1.17.3).

There remains to be considered, however, what is arguably the most important testimony for the ceremony: its foundation legend (*aition*), which survives in part in a fragment of the sixth-century cosmogony of Pherekydes of Syros. The *anakaluptêria*, Pherekydes says, has its origin in the marriage of Zas (= Zeus) to Chthonia. This is preceded by the creation of his grand *oikos*, consisting of houses and possessions. On the third day, Zas weaves the whole world into a great mantle, *pharos*. There follows a lacuna, after which we find Zas offering this mantle to Chthonia and asking her to unite with him. Accepting the mantle, she makes her reply, but at this point the text breaks off.⁵¹

For him they make the houses many and great. And when they had finished providing all this, and also furnishings and men-servants and maid-servants and all else required, when all is ready, they carry out the wedding. On the third day of the wedding, Zas makes a mantle (*pharos*), large and fair, and in it he weaves Earth and Ogenos and his dwelling [. . .] “For wishing your marriage to take place, I honor you with this. Therefore receive my greeting and be my wife.” This they say was the first *anakaluptêria*, and hence arose the custom among gods and men. And she answers him, receiving the robe from him [. . .].

It is apparent that the information we have about the *anakaluptêria* breaks down into categories according to the genres of our sources. In the antiquarian and anecdotal material furnished by the lexicographers, one finds no mention of the mantle in connection with an unveiling, and the bride does not uncover herself, but is uncovered. The visual and literary imagery, on the other hand, focuses suggestively on the figure of the mantle and on the gesture by which the bride uncovers herself. And at the heart of the foundation legend is a very special mantle, which the bride does not take off but receives, at a point at which she is obviously in the presence of her groom. These are not contradictory accounts. Rather, one may think of them as representing different points of view of the same event. Understanding the nature of the ceremony involves, therefore, a kind of triangulation, mapping the relationship of the archetype of all *anakaluptêria* to come -- its *aition* -- to ritual actions and to perceptions and folk-explanations of those actions. The symbolic import of the mantle can hardly be overplayed, and that shall be our starting point. The robe appears indirectly in another fragment of Pherekydes, where we learn that “Zas and Khronos existed always, and Chthonia; but Chthonia acquired the name Ge (Earth), since Zas gives the earth to her as a gift of honour (*geras*)” (frag. 14 Schibli; translation Freeman 1948, modified). As Schibli notes,⁵²

The *geras* is the embroidered earthrobe, the gift of honour and wedding present for the bride of Zas. . . . The bestowal of the robe upon Chthonia signifies not only a bridal gift but also an official act of investiture by which she becomes Ge.

In the symbolic function of the mantle in the wedding of Zas and Chthonia, we have an explanation of the role of the nuptial mantle in visual representations of the wedding and the wife. This is the first of a series of correspondences between the foundation legend of the *anakaluptêria* and its earthly performance. Zas's bride is Chthonia, “she who is beneath the earth”. Like the word *engûê*, her name evokes the image of the bride in subterranean confinement, from which she emerges on the day she meets her husband.

Chthonia undergoes a transformation. The turning point is her acceptance of the mantle, when the groom addresses her for the first time.⁵³ With the great mantle (*pharos*), she receives the earth as her domain and becomes Earth herself. The mortal bride's transformation into fertile ground is stated in the classic marriage formula that casts her in the shape of arable land: "I give you this woman for the sowing of legitimate children." The explanatory legend for the *anakaluptêria* thus contains the blueprint of the symbolic structure of the wedding, which should guide our interpretation of the disparate fragments of evidence for the ritual. The "uncovering" that gives the day its name refers primarily, I suggest, to the emergence of the bride into sight, from figurative seclusion in *enguê*. This is in line with the testimony of Hesychius, who defines *anakaluptêrion* as the bringing forth of the bride.⁵⁴ We are not told how the mortal bride acquired her nuptial mantle, nor at which point in the proceedings she put it on.⁵⁵ It is possible that it came to be understood simply as nuptial attire, but the votive reliefs from Locri, mentioned above, may indicate that this garment was the focus of ritual acts that have left no trace in the literature. It is likely that the bride wore the nuptial mantle as she emerged from her chamber, at once revealed and veiled. Poised in the bridal gesture, she exposed her face to the groom, shielding it, at the same time, from the other men present. Whether or not this act was ritually significant remains to be seen. It certainly came to be perceived as having symbolic import, as the passages of Euphron and Philostratus cite above demonstrate.

Weddings and funerals

In the donning of the wife's mantle I would identify the liminal phase of some kind of rite of passage. But does this action also produce a profound change in the bride and mark the beginning of her incorporation or initiation into a new community comparable to that secured by funeral rites for the dead?

The conceit that the death of a maiden ready for marriage (the *numphê*) is a marriage in Hades or to Hades, is commonplace in funerary epigrams and frequently exploited on the Athenian tragic stage. Significantly and poignantly, the moment of death is often made to coincide with the *anakaluptêria*, particularly the wedding procession. For example, Erinna's epitaph for Baucis (*Anthologia Palatina* 7.712) tells us that Baucis died when the cortege had reached the groom's house: her father-in-law lights the funeral pyre with the torches that had lit her wedding procession; the wedding songs (*hymenaia*) turned into dirges. A number of studies produced over the past twenty years have analyzed these and many other examples, in which the death of a maiden or a bride is represented as a marriage in Hades or to Hades himself. These analyses have stressed points of resemblance between the rites of *ekdosis* and funerals. It is now a widely accepted proposition that the correspondences between wedding and funeral are made possible by the fact that the two rituals are structurally alike. Seaford gave an influential formulation of this idea:⁵⁶

A transition effected by nature (death) is enclosed by the imagination within a similar transition effected by culture (marriage). It is important to observe that this enclosure is facilitated by the presence in the wedding of elements associated with death, to some extent perhaps actual lamentation, but, more importantly ‘equivocal’ elements common to the two rites of passage.

One speaks, accordingly, of an “interpenetration”, or a “conflation of marriages and funerals”, in a way that implies that marriage is as much a death as death is a marriage. Against this interpretation of the “Bride of Death” topos in tragedy, funerary epigrams, and visual imagery stands the fact that, while the bride’s death may be cast as a marriage, a marriage is never cast as a death. “Bride of Hades”, in other words, is a metaphor, in which a very special type of death is projected through the vehicle of the wedding. As any metaphor, it demands that we distinguish between vehicle and tenor, and that we know which parts of the metaphoric image to focus on, and which ones to ignore. In this case, we know that the bride’s journey to her new home is not irreversible and that, far from abandoning her, her kin retains control over her. The metaphor turns suggestively upon the imagery of the *anakaluptêria*, particularly the procession: the torches, the songs, the chamber. The funeral procession and the marriage cortege, however, are not analogous, but one the reversal of the other, moving, as it were, in opposite directions: the first follows the uncovering, the “bringing out” of the woman, the latter moves toward her burial.

Fundamentally, the conceit of the marriage in Hades relies on a root metaphor, which is frequent in Greek, that of the grave as a *thalamos*, the place of sleep. This image is employed in the case of the maiden ready for marriage with a particular twist. The particular *thalamos* to which she is consigned is projected as the one in which the marriage would be consummated: the room with the nuptial bed, the *numpheion*. The difference between the bland figure of the grave as the final resting place and the grave of the bride is the difference between a death that is perceived as part of the natural order of things and a death that comes unfairly at the wrong time. The dead *numphê* is *aorê*, “untimely dead”, and her grave is charged with chthonic potency and makes an excellent conduit to the infernal powers.⁵⁷ The death of the woman of an age to marry is a violation of both the natural and the social order. It opens up the vision of the world upside down, where the young die and females do not give birth, where things can be truly perceived only by looking at them backwards.⁵⁸ Wedding songs and dirges, wedding torches and funeral torches, the wedding banquet and the meal that follows the funeral are not analogous to one another, but represented as polar opposites to convey the idea of an inverted ritual. When a maiden ready to marry dies, and particularly when she is murdered, the normal order of things is reversed and the *ekdosis* is replaced by the *enguê*, with horrible results.

In Sophocles' *Antigone* this conceit is deployed in a sustained manner, making use of the image of the cavern, the stony hollow. Thebes is a city where cultural norms have been turned upside down, where the dead lay unburied, where it is left to a woman to stand up for what is right. Antigone openly defies Creon's edict, which prohibits the burial of her brother's corpse. The king of Thebes is as well her present guardian (*kurios*) and future father-in-law, since she is betrothed to his son Haimon. Creon should deliver Antigone to the groom, but he does the opposite. Instead of "giving her out", Creon buries her in "a rocky cavern" (774), to which she is led as though to a bridal chamber – "the hollowed rock, death's stone bridal chamber" (1204–5). The exclamation of Antigone as she enters the cavern is deservedly the most famous expression of the metaphor of the grave as *numpheion* (891–4): "Tomb, bridal chamber, prison forever dug in rock, it is to you I am going to join my people, that great number that have died, whom in their death Persephone received." Note that Antigone is not the bride of Hades: let her marry someone *in* Hades, Creon says (654); Hades leads her alive to the shore of Acheron, but to marry Acheron (808–10); and, in the end, she marries Haimon, in Hades (1240–1).

Antigone's infernal wedding is emblematic of the world upside down over which Creon rules. Tiresias reveals to him the monstrosity of his policies (1068–71):

You have thrust one that belongs above below the earth, and bitterly dishonored a living soul by lodging her in her grave; while one that belonged indeed to the underworld gods you have kept on this earth without due share of rites of burial, of due funeral offerings, a corpse unhallowed.

This passage unambiguously proposes the death of the bride as a prime instance of normative inversion and the polar opposite of the wedding. For marriage to Hades, or in Hades, is no marriage at all: no *humenaia* ("wedding hymns") accompany Antigone to the shore of Acheron (806–14); she will have no bridal bed, no bridal song, no joy of marriage, no portion in the nurture of children (916–20):

And now he takes me by the hand and leads me away, unbedded, without bridal, without share in marriage and in the nurturing of children; as lonely as you see me; without friends; with fate against me I go to the vault of death.

Conclusion

Most importantly for present purposes, death is a state from which a woman will never emerge, and that is not true of marriage. The dead person is



Figure 2.1 Attic red-figure loutrophoros, now lost. Previously in Berlin, Staatliche Museen F2372. After A. Furtwängler, *Die Sammlung Sabouloff. I.* Berlin: A. Ascher & Co., 1883, pl. 58.

permanently separated from the living and incorporated into the community of the shadows; the boy is initiated into the *polis*. Neither can ever go back to what he was before. But a woman can cross the threshold of marriage many times over, unaccompanied by ritual on the reverse journey, becoming each time a bride again, to be pledged and given out, to be revealed again for the first time and carried off with torches raised high and the singing of *hymenaia* and hymns, under escort. “Twice given out, twice pledged” (*dis ekdotheisa, dis enguêtheisa*) says the speaker of one of Isaeus’ speeches of his mother with understandable pride (8.29). The process that makes a maiden into a wife and mother entails, the first time, the loss of *parthenia* (“maidenhood”) but does not produce any change in her as a social being. One might say of marriage what Lincoln has said of female “initiations” in general: “Status is the concern of the male, and women are excluded from direct participation in the social hierarchy. The only status that is independently theirs, if status it be, is that of woman.”⁵⁹

The wedding is surely a rite of passage, but not one that left indelible marks on the object of the ritual. Rather than with initiations, it has affinities with what Van Gennep called “rites of appropriation”, “whose purpose it is to remove a person from the common domain in order to incorporate him into a special domain: rites of sacred appropriation of new lands, the transfer of relics, or of statues of gods”. For this reason, perhaps, the transfer of the bride to her husband’s house is the defining moment of the marriage in the imagery of the wedding, as on a Classical loutrophoros (fig 2.1). “The act of carrying”, Van Gennep writes, “is in this context the performance of a transition rite.”⁶⁰

Notes

A fuller version of this chapter appeared in chapter 8 of Ferrari (2002).

- 1 Van Gennepe (1960) ch. 7; Webster (1908); Schurtz (1902).
- 2 Vernant (1974) 65.
- 3 [Demosthenes], *Against Neaera* 122: "For this is to be married, to have children and to introduce the sons into one's phratry and one's deme and to give out the daughters to the men as one's own."
- 4 Van Gennepe (1960) 67; see also Brelich (1969) 42–3.
- 5 The striking use of wedding imagery in laments was fully analyzed by Alexiou and Dronke (1971) 819–63. See, further, Jenkins (1983); Seaford (1987); Rehm (1994).
- 6 Vêrilhac and Vial (1998) give the latest exhaustive survey of sources for the ancient Greek marriage.
- 7 Redfield (1982) 188.
- 8 Demosthenes 46.18. The procedure is not limited to Athens. Herodotus, 6.57.4, refers to marriage by *engûê* at Sparta, and, according to Diodorus Siculus, 9.10.4, "by most of the Greeks the marriage contract is called *engûê*." On the diffusion of this term see Vatin (1970) 157–63.
- 9 Vêrilhac and Vial (1998) 229–58, argue unconvincingly that *engûê* and *ekdosis* are two words for one and the same act of "giving" the bride, which is, in turn, distinct from the *gamos*.
- 10 Wolff (1944) remains of fundamental importance. For a recent attempt to recover in Greek marriage practices the structure of a quasi-legal process that might resemble Roman marriage procedures, see Patterson (1991) and Patterson (1998) 107–14.
- 11 Wolff (1944) 51–3. Vêrilhac and Vial (1998) 229–32, review the history of scholarship on the *engûê*. As a historical example of an *engûê* that has no effect, one often cites the notorious case of Demosthenes' father, who near death pledged by *engûê* his wife to Aphobos and his five-year-old daughter to Demophon; Demosthenes 28.15–16; 29.43; Harrison (1968) 6–8.
- 12 MacDowell (1978) 86.
- 13 *Periêkeiromene* 1013–14. Occurrences of this formula in ancient authors are collected by Vêrilhac and Vial (1998) 232–3.
- 14 Isaeus 8.29: "For distant events I furnished hearsay vouched for by witnesses; among those who are still alive, I produced those who are familiar with the facts, who knew well that my mother was brought up in his house, that she was regarded as his daughter, that she was twice given out in marriage (*ekdotheisan*), twice pledged (*engûêtheisan*)."
- 15 Wolff (1944) 48–51, the quotation from p. 48.
- 16 Wolff (1944) 47, 50, 53–65. Gernet (1983) 210: "Au total, la femme est un instrument; et même mariée au dehors, elle n'est jamais ni intégrée au groupe de son mari, ni détachée de son groupe original. Les significations de la dot sont en rapport avec l'institution matrimoniale: le mari ne devient jamais propriétaire de la dot, laquelle est transmise aux enfants s'il y a des enfants – et, s'il n'y en a pas doit toujours être rétrocedée au constituant. Elle est l'accompagnement symbolique de la femme qui, en un sens, n'est jamais que 'prêtée'."
- 17 Just (1989) 95–104, gives a clear and concise exposition of the rules governing *epiklêroi* at Athens. For a broader, if tendentious, overview, see Patterson (1998), 91–106.
- 18 Gernet (1983) 207; Cox (1998) 71–72; Thompson (1972). Cohn-Haft's thesis (1995), that

- divorce was infrequent has all the weaknesses of arguments from silence.
- 19 Just (1989) 85–9.
 - 20 Just (1989) 85–9.
 - 21 Chantraine (1968–80) 240.
 - 22 Wolff (1944) 52.
 - 23 Gernet (1917) 249–93, 363–83, particularly pp. 365–73; Harrison (1968) 3–6. Sutton (1989) 334–51 tentatively identified the *engué* in the representation of an old king shaking hands with a youthful traveler on the loutrophoros in Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 03.802. There may be an allusion here to the wedding to come, which is represented on the other side of the vase. In and of itself, however, the handshake need be no more than a gesture of greeting.
 - 24 Chantraine (1968–80) 239.
 - 25 Hesychius s.v. “*guala*.”
 - 26 Callimachus, *Hecale* frag. 235–36: “For in Troizen he put it [the sword] under a hollow stone together with the boots . . . whenever the child should be strong enough to lift with his hands the hollow stone.”
 - 27 *Anthologia Palatina* 7.43: “Hail Euripides, who inhabit the chamber of eternal night in the dark-leaved valleys (*en gualoisi*) of Pieria! Know that, although you are under the earth, your glory shall be everlasting, equal to the perennial grace of Homer.”
 - 28 Pindar, *Nemean* 10, 55–6: “Changing in succession, they spend one day with their dear father Zeus, the other in the caves (*en gualois*) of Therapne deep under the earth.”
 - 29 On images as metaphoric expression and their cognitive function see Ferrari (1990); Ferrari (1997); Ferrari (2002) ch. 3.
 - 30 Benveniste (1969) 159–61.
 - 31 Of particular interest here are Gernet’s observations, in his essay on the mythical concept of value, connecting the idea of *thesauros* as a “vault . . . dug into rock and covered with a lid” with the *thalamos*, where a wife or daughter would be kept; see Gernet (1968) 129–30.
 - 32 Oakley (1982) 113; Vêrilhac and Vial (1998) 304.
 - 33 The term *anakalupsis*, commonly used in modern scholarship on the Greek wedding, apparently occurs only once in extant literature, in Plutarch, *Moralia* 518D1, to mean “disclosure” of some sickness. In formation, *anakaluptêria* is analogous to, e.g., *anthesteria*, the festival of flowers, and means “the feast of *anakaluptein*”; see Chantraine (1933) 62–4. Whatever form it took, the uncovering was only one part of the *anakaluptêria*, since the festal day identified by that name included as well the banquet, the procession that accompanied the newlyweds to their destination, and the reception of the bride in her new *oikos*. The word itself might be used, therefore, for other moments of that day. The historian Timaeus (*FGrH* 566F122), for instance, reports that Agathocles of Syracuse abducted his niece, who had been given to another man, “from the *anakaluptêria*”. The theft is likely to have taken place during the procession, the classic moment for attempts on the bride, who traveled under escort precisely in order to guard against attacks of this kind; see Deubner (1900) 149; Toutain (1940) 345. On the escort guarding the bride and cases of attempted seduction and rape on route, see Oakley and Sinos (1993) 27.
 - 34 Pollux, *Onomasticon* 3.36; Harpocration, s.v. “*anakaluptêria*”. See also Suda, *Lexicon*, s.v. “*anakaluptêria*”; Deubner (1900) 148–51.
 - 35 See above, n. 34, and Pollux, *Onomasticon* 2.59.

- 36 Hesychius, s.v. “*anakaluptêrion*.”
- 37 The view that the unveiling preceded the procession is represented by Deubner (1900) 149–50; Patterson (1991) 68 n. 40; Oakley (1982) 113–14. For the hypothesis that it took place at the groom’s house, see Toutain (1940); Sissa (1990) 97–8; Rehm (1994) 141–2; Vêrilhac and Vial (1998) 304–12. Harpocraton (above n. 34) has been accused of confusing the *anakaluptêria* with the *epaulia*, which was the day after; Deubner (1900) 148; Oakley (1982) 13 n. 5; Vêrilhac and Vial (1998) 304 n. 68. On the *epaulia*, according to the lexicographer Pausanias, quoted by Eustathius at *Iliad* 24.29, a procession brought the gifts to the groom’s house, as well as the dowry. To this list the Suda, s.v. “*epaulia*”, adds *kêbrusia* (“jewelry”). Together with the mention of the dowry, this suggests that the *epaulia* does not involve a second wave of wedding presents, but was the formal delivery of the gifts that had been assembled in the bride’s house on the *anakaluptêria*; see Zancani Montuoro (1960) 48–9. Harpocraton’s statement, therefore, may be interpreted to say that *anakaluptêria* is the name of the gifts given on the occasion of the *anakaluptêria*, and that another name for the same gifts is *epaulia*, the occasion when they were ceremonially delivered to the groom’s house.
- 38 Bekker (1814) 200.6–8 (=390.26).
- 39 Deubner (1900) 149, 151, followed by Oakley (1982) 113–14, and Patterson (1991) 68 n. 40.
- 40 “Salt-cellar”, Bonn, University 994; On this and other vase paintings of the bride with her face covered, see Oakley and Sinos (1993) 31–2, 137 n. 63, figs. 68–70
- 41 Rehm (1994) 47.
- 42 On *aidôs* and veiling see Ferrari (1990). The term *aidôs* is untranslatable, but in this context “modesty” comes closest.
- 43 Attic black-figure hydria, Florence, Museo Archeologico 3790; *ABV*, 260, 30.
- 44 New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art 56.11.1, *Paralipomena*, 66; *Beazley Addenda*, 45.
- 45 Oakley (1982) 116 n. 16. Many examples are illustrated in Oakley and Sinos (1993); see fig. 85 (loutrophoros in Athens, National Museum 1174); fig. 90 (pyxis Louvre L 55); fig. 94 (loutrophoros in Copenhagen, National Museum 9080); fig. 106 (loutrophoros in Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 03.802);
- 46 Oakley and Sinos (1993) 35, figs. 100–4. Much attention has focused on a classical loutrophoros in Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 10.223, which offers a representation of the bride and groom seated facing one another, in the presence of a young man, while a woman pours down on them a basketful of small objects. Behind the bride, an attendant lifts the veil or mantle from her forehead. Sutton (1989) 351–9, identified in this picture the *katakhusmata*, the showering of the newly married woman with dried fruit and nuts upon her arrival at the groom’s house. Following Beazley, *ARV*², 1017, 44, and Sutton, 358, I believe that this action should be understood as a veiling, rather than an unveiling. As in the examples just cited, it is a means of emphasizing the mantle or veil, not, as Oakley (1982) 114–8, has argued, its removal.
- 47 Boston, Museum of Fine Arts 13.186; *ARV*², 458, 1; Oakley and Sinos (1993) 32–3, fig. 86.
- 48 Zancani Montuoro (1960) 40–50; Prückner (1968) 42–5.
- 49 Marconi (1994) 142–4, 276–90.
- 50 Euphorion frag. 111 Van Groningen.
- 51 Frag. 68 Schibli. Translation Freeman (1948) modified.
- 52 Translation Freeman 1948, modified. Schibli (1990) 51–2.
- 53 Schibli (1990) 63–4, maintains the traditional view that the unveiling was central to the

anakaluptêria, but notes “The custom at Greek nuptials to which Pherekydes refers was not, however, the unveiling itself, but the giving of gifts by bridegroom (or friends and relatives) to bride; in Pherekydes’ account this is reflected in the presentation of the robe by Zas to Chthonia” (64).

- 54 Hesychius, above n. 36.
- 55 Schibli (1990) 65–6, cites mythical parallels for Zas’s gift of a robe to his bride: the *peploi* given to Harmonia by Cadmus, together with the notorious necklace (Apollodorus 3.4.2) upon their marriage, and the beautiful *peplos* that Helen gave to Telemachus, destined for his bride (*Odyssey* 15.123–8).
- 56 Seaford (1987) 106–7.
- 57 Faraone (1991) 22 n.6; Johnston (1999) ch 5.
- 58 Balthasar Gracian, *El Criticón*, cited by Babcock (1978) 13–36 (the quotation on p. 13). On opposites in Greek thought and “polar expressions”, see Lloyd (1971) Part 1.
- 59 Lincoln (1991) 102.
- 60 Van Gennepe (1960) 186–7.

PLAYING THE BEAR AND FAWN FOR ARTEMIS

Female initiation or substitute sacrifice?

Christopher A. Faraone

There is a general consensus among scholars that the temple compound of Artemis at Brauron on the eastern coast of Attica was the site in archaic and classical times of a female initiation rite referred to somewhat mysteriously in our extant sources as “playing the bear for Artemis” or “serving as a bear for Artemis.”¹ The most recent edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (1994) provides a cautious summary of the current state of interpretation (s.v. “Brauron”):

Cult activity at Brauron was particularly associated with the *arkteia*, a ritual . . . in which young girls between the ages of five and ten “became” bears. . . . Modern scholars suggest that the ritual was a rite of passage which marked the physical maturation of pubescent girls and prepared them for taming by marriage by stressing their wildness.

According to this popular consensus the *arkteia* is a form of age-grade initiation or rite of passage, but there are those who push for an even more esoteric form of mystery cult, like that at Eleusis,² or interpret it specifically as a pre-nuptial initiation that “prepares” girls for marriage.³ Others use the label “initiation” with discomfort, either complaining that the term is too vague,⁴ or arguing that the rite was originally an initiation, but later on evolved or devolved into something else.⁵ But very few scholars try to explain the ceremony without recourse to an initiatory model.⁶

This somewhat fuzzy consensus has developed, in part, because of the indiscriminate or interchangeable use of the terms “initiation”, “transition ritual” and “rite of passage.” Some, for example, assume that all of these terms mean the same thing while others blur the two senses of the term “initiation”, which can be used to describe: (i) age-grade or puberty rituals that mark the entrance, for example, of a young man into a band of male warriors or citizens;⁷ and (ii) ceremonies connected to mystery cults like those celebrated

at Eleusis that mark the entrance of an individual into a secret society usually focused on eschatological expectations.⁸ In this essay, I take the terms “initiation” or “initiatory” to refer to a specific subset of “rites of passage” (or “transition rites”) that ceremonially mark an individual’s entrance into a new group and that focus primarily on “the successful growth and development of the individual.”⁹ In short, initiates are thought to undergo some important qualitative change both in their public status and in their self-awareness of their own personal growth and individuation. In what follows, I will focus, as do most of the authors in this volume, on this narrower notion of “initiation” and I shall argue that there is no evidence that the girls who played or served as “bears” for Artemis ever entered into a new group or underwent any training, preparation or personal change of this sort.

I also hope to show how this general – albeit shifting and increasingly uncomfortable – consensus provides us with an excellent illustration of the great power of the “initiation paradigm” over the minds of classicists and historians of ancient Greek religion. Indeed, I shall argue that these alleged Brauronian initiation rites are based on a number of individually questionable assumptions or comparisons, and that, when we look closely (and without the help of the initiation paradigm) at the *arkteia* and similar rites connected with the worship of Artemis along the Aegean coast of Attica, Boeotia and Thessaly, we are left with clear evidence for a series of rituals of a generally *sacrificial* type performed by young women at times of national crisis or at a time of heightened personal vulnerability (i.e. just before marriage) to appease the deadly anger of Artemis.¹⁰ In what follows, I shall not rehearse all of the recent bibliography or arguments adduced in favor of Brauronian initiations, but rather I offer a short and (I hope) succinct two-part study. In the first half, I show how the current consensus is based on two questionable premises: (i) that we can easily compare male ephebic initiations with female initiations and (ii) that we can import from other parts of Greece non-Attic ideas about Artemis as a huntress leading a band of initiates/nymphs and use them to interpret a set of myths and rituals shared by the Athenians and their Ionian cousins, in which Artemis most often appears as a dangerous plague god, whose arrows bring death to humans, not wild animals. In the second half, I translate and discuss the most important textual sources for the *arkteia* rituals and I show that we do not have, in fact, evidence for a single initiation ceremony, but rather for a series of two or three different and perhaps unrelated sacrificial rites aimed at the appeasement of Artemis.

Problems with the initiatory hypothesis

We have very little contemporary testimony about the rite of “playing the bear for Artemis”. The ritual is first glimpsed in Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*, where the female semi-chorus make an elaborate boast to justify their right to advise the Athenians on how to save themselves in a time of dire emergency:¹¹

At seven years old I was performing the *arrêphoria*, next when I was ten I was a “flour-grinder” (*aletris*) for the founding goddess and then while wearing the saffron robe (*krokotos*), I was a bear (*arktos*) at the Brauronian festival. And at some point while I was (i.e. still) a beautiful child I carried the basket while wearing a necklace of dried figs.

The claim to have been a “bear”, therefore, is embedded in a sequence of four cultic duties that were apparently worth boasting about: the first was to serve as an *arrêphoros* (one of a pair of girls who served Athena Polias); the second was to be a “flour-grinder” (*aletris*) for the Founding Goddess (i.e. Athena); the third was to be a “bear” (*arktos*) and the fourth was to “carry a basket” (i.e. be a *kanêphoros*, “a basket-bearer”) presumably in another procession. Brelich, in his classic study of Greek initiations, saw these as a linked series of four initiations (each at a different age) through which every Athenian girl passed, but his theory has not stood the test of time; indeed, scholars have in recent years been unable to verify any initiatory aspect of the “corn-grinding” or the “basket carrying” roles, and the *arrêphoria* has recently been ruled out as well.¹² Thus in arguing that Artemis’ “bears” were involved in sacrificial, not initiatory rituals, I am following a trend in recent scholarship in dismantling the last of Brelich’s series of four age-grade initiations.

Aside from Aristophanes, the only other extant classical witness to this Artemisian “bear” ceremony is his contemporary Lysias, the orator, who in a lost speech apparently used the verb *arkteuein*, “to play the bear” to refer to young women who “dedicated themselves” or “paid a tithe” to Artemis before getting married.¹³ As we shall see, the ancient scholiasts explained the noun *arktos* in Aristophanes and verb *arkteuein* in Lysias as references to a number of different activities performed by girls and young women at Brauron and other Attic sanctuaries of Artemis, where they are connected with foundation myths about the killing of a bear in the goddess’ sanctuary. In recent years, scholars have sought to connect this rather weak stream of literary evidence with a series of energetic images on black-figured bowls (called *krateriskoi* by the archaeologists) found in Artemisian sanctuaries at Brauron, Munychia and elsewhere in Attica.¹⁴ These vases show girls and young women singing, dancing, parading, and racing in the nude, actions that are of course rare in the carefully controlled world of Athenian women, and are assumed by many scholars to be part of the “wildness” that is generally associated with initiations.¹⁵ Even more enticing and difficult to interpret are the three unprovenanced fragments from somewhat later, mid fifth-century red-figured *krateriskoi* that show similar scenes of running or dancing as well as some unique figures: a bear, the family group of Artemis, Leto and Apollo, and two figures who are either wearing bear masks or depicted in the midst of an ursine transformation. These red-figured vases are of a much higher artistic quality and they have sparked the imagination of many scholars who wish to

connect them with the *arkteia* ritual,¹⁶ but it seems unlikely that they served the same ritual function that the cheaper and more numerous black-figured vases did.¹⁷ More importantly, for my purposes: there is, in the end, nothing in the iconographic evidence from the black-figured *krateriskoi* (for example: altars, dances or races) that points clearly and unequivocally to initiation. We do not see, for instance, any indication that the girls are mimetically reproducing the behavior or characteristics of a bear.¹⁸ These paintings on the *krateriskoi* could, for instance, quite easily be evidence for some other festival of Artemis celebrated at the sanctuary, similar to the athletic games for Hera at Olympia, in which women competed (like male Olympic athletes) in races and other events at a separate festival from which the men were barred.¹⁹

In the end, all who argue that “playing the bear” for Artemis was an initiation rite in one way or another combine this ceramic material with the literary testimony to describe a single rite. They also depend very heavily on some kind of comparison to other rituals about which we have more information, and it is my next goal to show how many of the explicit and implicit comparisons made on behalf of the Brauronian initiations are faulty. Many scholars, for example, begin their inquiries with a somewhat simplistic and usually unexamined assumption that whenever we have evidence for a group of young men or women performing a ritual, this ritual must at its heart be an initiation or a rite of passage. Several of the essays collected in this volume question this widely held assumption. This faulty premise leads, moreover, to the equally shaky presumption that we can reconstruct female initiation rites in ancient Greece (for which we have woefully little evidence) by comparing them to the only slightly better documented male initiation rituals. It has been suggested, for example, that the female “bears” at Brauron have the same significance as the boy “wolves” have in the male initiation ceremonies connected with the Lykaia festival in Arcadia.²⁰ In a landmark essay published twenty years ago, however, Bruce Lincoln rightly questioned the general soundness of this method, pointing out that whereas van Gennep’s three-step model (separation, liminality and reintegration) and his notion of “territorial passage” to a periphery and back may have helped our understanding of male initiation ceremonies, they are in fact unhelpful in the case of female initiation rites which usually do *not* require spatial movement to a periphery and focus instead on enclosure and metamorphosis *within* the community.²¹

In the case of classical Athens, this method of comparing male and female initiation results in the flawed equation of the putatively initiatory experiences of the Athenian *ephebōi* with the rites of Artemis celebrated at Brauron. Some, for instance, see parallel initiation rites for young men at the temple of Artemis at Halai and for women at her temple at Brauron, which both focus on an animal sacrificed as a surrogate for the initiand.²² Others argue that the scene of young Athenian women allegedly acting like wild bears in the inhospitable

terrain (mostly swamps) of Brauron far away from the center of the city of Athens, is readily comparable with the scenario for Athenian ephebic training as envisioned by Vidal-Naquet in his famous “Black Hunter” essay.²³ It follows (so the argument goes) that these women are being initiated into their roles as housewives (and eventually mothers) by a similarly “wild” experience. Unfortunately, the model for comparison, Vidal-Naquet’s reconstruction of the wildness of this ephebic experience is itself flawed, as the essay of Polinskaya in this volume demonstrates. The small size of the temple enclosure at Brauron raises yet another problem for such a comparison: whereas we assume that nearly every Athenian male citizen went through ephebic training along with all the boys in his age cohort, it was physically impossible for all of the young women of Athens to be sequestered and then initiated at a single festival at Brauron.

Those more familiar with Brauronian archaeology and topography have made a more subtle argument, suggesting that a small number of specially selected girls (much like the *arrêphoroi* who wove the Panathenaic *peplos*) performed the *arkteia* at Brauron, and in so doing somehow represented all of the girls of their age-grade, who were thought to be initiated by proxy and *in absentia*.²⁴ Unfortunately these scholars can provide no evidence for this concept of “representative initiation” as a cross-cultural phenomenon and they are forced to argue that this is a feature unique to the ancient Greek world. Dowden, for instance, suggests (1989: 26–7) that initiation ceremonies in ancient Greece range from complete age-group rites (e.g. ephebic rites) to select age-group rituals (e.g. like the alleged *arkteia* initiation by proxy) to “single individuals assigned to sacred service” such as in the case of the *arrêphoroi*. Some have suggested, in fact, that this spectrum of rituals evolved along with the political unification (synoicism) of Attica and its increased population growth: the bear ritual was originally designed to initiate all of the young women living near Brauron, but when the cult grew in the late sixth century under Peisistratid patronage into a pan-Attic festival, the idea of initiating all of the women had to be abandoned in favor of a representative system.²⁵ It is true, that in some ancient Greek rituals an individual or a small group can act on behalf of the many. Indeed, in the second half of this essay, I will argue that one of the rituals performed by the girls at Brauron (a communal sacrifice) is “representative” for all Athenian young women and perhaps all Athenians generally, in the very widely documented sense (in Greece and elsewhere) of “representative sacrifice” or “metonymic sacrifice”, that is: a ritual in which a city sacrifices an individual (like a scapegoat) or a small group of individuals, to keep the wrath of a deity away from the rest of the populace. The case for “representative initiation” or “initiation by proxy” has, however, not yet been carefully made and is, I fear, indefensible.²⁶

We have seen, then, that although the weak evidence for the *arkteia* demands that scholars make comparisons with other rituals that are better documented, such comparisons with male initiations, Athenian or otherwise,

have ultimately not been useful. There is a similar problem with comparing Athenian rites with other Greek rituals, on the assumption that people all over the Greek world worshipped Artemis in the same way. Many scholars, for example, argue for the initiatory character of “playing the bear” at Brauron by making inappropriate comparisons with Artemisian rites practiced in other parts of the Greek world, especially the Peloponneseian rituals and myths associated with Artemis the huntress. It is quite clear, however, that Artemis and her brother Apollo were worshipped quite differently in the Ionic and Aegean areas of Greece, where they usually appear as twin plague gods.²⁷ In Homer, for example, both Apollo and Artemis appear undisguised as killers of humans,²⁸ and other episodes suggest that it is Artemis who destroys the women and Apollo the men.²⁹ Thus Apollo appears alone with his bow as the cause of the plague that decimates the Greek army camped on the Anatolian coast near Troy (1.43–54), and he singly assassinates a number of men: Menelaus’ helmsman (*Od.* 3. 279–80); the Aloadae (11. 318); and Achilles at Troy (Pindar *Paean* 6.80–82). Artemis, on the other hand, seems to be the special killer of woman; this is explicitly stated by Hera: “... even if you are an archer, since Zeus has set you as a lion upon women and granted that you may kill whatever woman you wish” (*Il.* 21.483–4). And Odysseus asks his mother in the underworld: “Was it a lingering illness, or did the archer Artemis attack you with her gentle arrows and kill you?,” a question which suggests that the goddess delivered a swift, and therefore a preferable death for elderly women (*Od.* 11.171–3, cf. her response at 198–201).

In this Aegean and Ionic cultural realm, moreover, we find a series of parallel rituals by which young men placate Apollo with special hymns (paean) and sacrificial rituals, while young women perform analogous appeasement rites for Artemis.³⁰ In the *Iliad*, for example, after Apollo sends the deadly plague against the Greeks, Agamemnon among other things sends some Achaean youths (*kouroi*) to Apollo’s sanctuary to perform a sacrifice on behalf of the whole army after which “all day long . . . [they] sought to appease the god with song, singing the beautiful paean to the Far-Shooter . . .” An inscription from Erythrae (c. 370 BCE) stipulates that after a sacrifice (*thusia*) the male participants must gather round the altar of Apollo and sing a paean three times that asks the god to spare the young men (*kouroi*) of the city.³¹ We also hear of paeans sung to Hekate (here = Artemis) during the annual parade of the mysterious *gylloi*-stones, which were set up for some protective or aversive purpose at the city gates of Didyma and Miletus, where they were the focus as well of songs in honor of Apollo Delphinios.³² The Athenians themselves sponsored an important annual procession of girls to their own Delphinion, a shrine shared by Apollo and Artemis. During this procession in honor of Artemis, these girls carried suppliant boughs of olive wrapped in white wool and apparently asked the goddess for protection.³³ Thus, since Athens shares many of its festivals with the Ionian Greeks in the Aegean and Anatolia, it is *a priori* more likely that the rites of Brauronian Artemis

would be closer in form to those of Artemis the plague goddess, than to those of the huntress goddess in the Peloponnese.

There are, moreover, important signs that the worship of Artemis at Brauron was closely connected historically with the goddess' Delian sanctuary, the center of Ionic worship of her and her brother Apollo. The scenes on the *krateriskoi*, for example, show a palm tree in the Brauronian sanctuary, which recalls the very famous palm at Delos.³⁴ Brauron was, moreover, situated on the Aegean coast of Attica and some have suggested that it should be added (along with the Marathonian Tetrapolis and Prasiai) to the list of sacred sites involved in the transfer of the offerings of the Hyperborean Maidens from the north of Greece to Delos.³⁵ It is no coincidence that Peisistratus, who in the sixth century seems to have elevated a small local cult of Artemis patronized by his clan at Brauron to great importance in Athens and Attica, was also closely involved in similar renovations and expansions at Delos. Indeed, it has been argued recently that the harbor at Brauron was in Peisistratid times used as the setting off point for an important religious embassy (*theoria*) from Athens to Delos.³⁶

Although it would, therefore, seem best to interpret the activities of the "bears" at Brauron in light of traditional rituals used in Aegean or Ionic cities, this has not in fact been the case. Scholars who argue for Brauronian initiations, in fact, regularly explain the *arkteia* by drawing comparisons with the myths and rituals, admittedly of a more initiatory character, found in the non-Ionic and non-Aegean realms of the Greek world, especially those native to the Peloponnese, where Artemis is much more closely connected with the pre-Greek "mistress of the animals" (*potnia thérôn*) and hunting.³⁷ In these other areas her bow is usually not a weapon designed to bring death to mortal women, but rather it is used almost exclusively to hunt wild animals. In her Peloponnesian guise, moreover, Artemis has no close connections to Apollo, who in these non-Ionic areas likewise is not a dangerous plague god, but rather a patron and supporter of the ephebes and closely associated – in both myth and ritual – with civic organization and male initiations into the community.³⁸ Scholars working on the cults of Artemis in the Peloponnese have, I think, argued much more successfully for initiatory concerns and structures in the myths and rites of Artemis the hunter, especially in the repeated scene of the youthful goddess hunting with her band of equally young nymphs.³⁹ The most popular story in this setting is, of course, the tale of Callisto, one of virginal Artemis' favorite companions, who is seduced by Zeus and later punished by the goddess, who turns the unfortunate nymph into a bear and in one very local version kills Callisto with an arrow.⁴⁰

It is, of course, the shared detail of the bear that has encouraged scholars to use these Peloponnesian myths and their initiatory motifs to help interpret the Attic Brauronian rites, where (they argue) the young women of Athens, who on the *krateriskoi*, at least, nakedly race and sport about in the company of a priestess of Artemis, seem to reproduce this idyllic pre-seduction state of

Artemis and her band of nubile followers – indeed, it has been suggested that the myths of Iphigeneia and Callisto share the same structure that connects them both to the “same ancient initiation patterns.”⁴¹ The detail of the bear has, however, had an exaggerated influence on scholars writing in the aftermath of Burkert’s *Homo Necans*, which traced the origin of Greek animal sacrifice back to alleged and no longer credible evidence for Neanderthal “bear burials” and circum-polar bear sacrifices.⁴² I would argue, in fact, that the bear, as a significant clue in interpreting this ritual, is quite misleading – a “red herring” of sorts – that has set a whole generation of scholars down the wrong path. First of all, there is evidence for a similar Artemisian rite of “playing the fawn” in other sanctuaries on the Aegean coast to the north of Attica, rituals which suggest that the specific type of animal (bear or fawn) is relatively unimportant.⁴³ Secondly, there is very little evidence that the myth of Callisto was important in classical Athens,⁴⁴ and although Artemis appears at Brauron and elsewhere in Attica with a bow, she was connected as a patroness of hunters and the hunt only in cultic activities concerned with men, a fact that further weakens the comparison with her band of huntresses in the Peloponnese.⁴⁵ The Peloponnesian myths, finally, regularly focus on flagrant female sexual misconduct of some kind – for example: Callisto’s sexual intercourse with Zeus, or a forbidden sexual liaison in Artemis’ temple at Patras – that links these myths with girls coming of age in a manner that is entirely absent in the Attic myths which focus on sacrifice and temple service for the safety of the city. Indeed, we shall see below, that the stipulation that girls must “serve” the goddess prior to marriage is connected solely with the idea that a city or a family is sacrificing a part of itself or granting a tithe, and has very little to do with any concern over the sexual maturation of the individual girls who perform the service.

Let me sum up, then, my concerns with the current trends in the scholarship on the *arkteia* as an initiation ritual. In light of the scant contemporary literary testimony and its tenuous connection to the ceramic evidence from the Artemis sanctuaries themselves, scholars have understandably looked for apt and useful comparisons to flesh out our sketchy evidence for the ritual. Such a comparative method is, of course, well suited to this and many other scholarly enterprises, provided that we choose the best comparanda. I have argued above, however, that in many cases, scholars working on the Brauronian bears have consistently drawn two kinds of faulty comparisons: either they have wrongly compared the female ceremonies at Brauron to Athenian male ephebic initiations (assuming that male and female initiation rites share the same structures, concerns and purposes), or they have mistakenly adduced as comparanda myths and rituals concerned with females in Arcadia and other Peloponnesian areas (assuming incorrectly that Greek women worshiped Artemis in similar ways throughout the Greek world).

“Bears” and “fawns” as representative or substitute sacrifices

Although the role of the “bear” (*arktos*) and the action of “playing the bear” or “serving as a bear” (*arkteuein*) are attested in late fifth-century BCE sources, the detailed descriptions of the ritual actions encompassed by these terms derive entirely from later scholia and lexicographical sources, which present at first glance a somewhat muddled description of what these girls or young women actually did. The confusion of these later accounts is, of course, completely understandable, since the rituals they aim to describe had ceased to be performed by c. 300 BCE, when among other things the temple complex at Brauron became unusable because of persistent flooding.⁴⁶ Scholars have traditionally sought to unearth a single ritual from the conflicting sources, but I shall argue that there are in fact probably two if not three different rites or services performed by the “bears”. I shall begin by offering a translation of all of the important later sources, focusing on the description of the rituals, not the foundation myths, which have been much more thoroughly analyzed:

1) The *Suda* (S) s.v. “I was a bear (*arktos*) at the Brauronia”:

- s1: They used to celebrate a festival (*beortê*) to Artemis by “playing the bear” (*arkteumenai*) and by wearing a saffron robe (*kerokoton*), being neither older than ten nor younger than five, and by placating (*apomelissomenai*) the goddess.
- s2: Once a wild bear was wandering about the deme of the Philaidae and was wreaking havoc. (They say) that the bear, once it had been tamed, became a companion to humans, and that a *parthenos* was playing with it, and when the child treated it roughly, the bear was provoked and scratched the *parthenos*. And that because of this, her brothers shot it down (*katakontisai*).
- s3: And for this reason a plague-like illness (*loimôdês nosos*) fell upon the Athenians. And when they petitioned the oracle, it said that there would be a release from these misfortunes, if as payments (*poinaî*) for the slain bear they forced their own *parthenoi* to “play the bear” (*arkteuein*). And the Athenians voted that a *parthenos* could not live together (*synoikizesthai*) with her husband, until she had played the bear for the goddess.

2) Scholia to the Leyden MS (L) of Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata* 644–5:

- L1: When females used to perform (*exeteloun*) the secret rite (*mustêrion*), they imitated a bear (*arkton mimoumenai*). Those “playing the bear” (*hai arkteumenai*) for the goddess used to

don a saffron robe (*krokoton*) and together perform the sacrifice (*sunteloun tèn thusian*) for Artemis of Brauron and Artemis of Munychia, *parthenoi* who were selected (*epilegomenai*) and neither older than ten nor younger than five. And the girls (*korai*) also performed the sacrifice (*thusia*) placating (*ekmelissomenai*) the goddess, since the Athenians had once encountered a famine after they had killed a tame bear to the displeasure(?) of the goddess.⁴⁷

- L2: Some say that the story of Iphigeneia took place in Brauron, not Aulis. Euphorion (refers to) “seaside Brauron, the cenotaph of Iphigeneia.” And it seems that Agamemnon sacrificed (*sphagiasai*) her at Brauron, not Aulis, and that a bear not a deer (*elaphos*) was put in her place. For which reason they perform a secret rite (*mustérion*) for her.
- L3: Another: a bear was given to Artemis’ temple and it was tamed. Once a *parthenos* taunted it and her face was scratched by the bear. Her brother got angry and killed the bear. Artemis got angry and commanded that every *parthenos* should imitate the bear (*mimêsasthai tèn arkton*) before her wedding (*gamos*), and to take care (*peribepain*) of the temple while wearing the yellow robe (*krokoton*), and this used to be called “playing the bear” (*arkteuesthai*).

3) Hesychius:

- HE1: s.v. *Brauroniois*: Rhapsodes used to sing the *Iliad* in Brauron of Attica. The Brauronia is a festival (*beortê*) performed for the Brauronian Artemis; a goat is sacrificed.
- HE2: s.v. *arkteia*: The ritual (*teletê*) of the *parthenoi* who “play the bear” (*arkteuomenai*). “To play the bear” (*arkteuein*) means “to dedicate” (*kathieroun*).

4) Harpocration:

- HA1: s.v. *arkteusai*: Lysias, in the speech on behalf of Phrynichus’ daughter, if it is genuine, uses the word to mean that *parthenoi* before marriage (*gamos*) were dedicated (*kathierôthênai*) to the Munychian Artemis or to the Brauronian one. And statements corroborating the above are given by others, especially Craterus in his play the *Psêphismata*. Euripides in his *Hypsipyle* and Aristophanes in his *Lemnians* and his *Lysistrata*, say that the *parthenoi* who “play the bear” (*arkteuomenai*) are called “bears” (*arktoi*).

HA2: s.v. *dekateusai*: ... Since Demosthenes in his speech *Against Medon* says thus about some *parthenoi*: "... not to tithe (*dekateusai*) or initiate (*muêsai*) her." Didymus, the grammarian, in his book on this speech says that Lysias in his speech about Phrynichus' daughter said that "to play the bear" (*arkteusai*) means "to tithe" (*dekateusai*). He (i.e. Didymus) says that "to tithe", of course, means to dedicate (*to katherôsai*), since it is a Greek custom to dedicate one-tenth of what remains (i.e. of war booty after a city is captured) to the god. Similarly the rhetor (i.e. Lysias) said that "to pay a tenth" (*dekateusai*) also means "playing the bear" (*to arkteusai*), since ten-year old girls used to play the bear.

5) Bekker, *Anecdota Graeca* p. 444 s.v. *arkteusai*:

B: Lysias mentioned that the term "to play the bear" (*arkteuein*) refers to how maidens (*parthenoi*) are dedicated (*kathierôthênai*) to Artemis before their weddings (*gamoî*). And *parthenoi* who "play the bear" (*arkteumenai*) are called "bears" (*arktoi*), as Euripides and Aristophanes (say). Otherwise it is said that "to play the bear" (*arkteusai*) means "to expiate oneself" (*aphosiôsthai*) and "to sacrifice" (*thusai*) to Artemis. This is said because once a bear appeared (so the story goes) in Piraeus and harmed many people, and afterwards it was killed by some young men and a plague ensued, and the god (i.e. Apollo) ordered them in an oracle to honor Artemis and to sacrifice a girl (*korê*) for the bear. And when, therefore, the Athenians were considering how to follow the oracle, one man would not prevent it, saying that he himself would perform the sacrifice. He got a goat and called it "daughter" and sacrificed it in secret. And the disease stopped. And when the citizens were in his confidence, he told them to question the god (i.e. Apollo) further. And when (the god) said that whoever claimed to have made the sacrifice should do it in this way also in the future, the man revealed what had happened in secret. And from this, girls (*korai*) before their wedding (*gamos*) did not hesitate "to play the bear" (*arkteuein*), as if they were expiating themselves (*aphosioumenai*) for the killing of the animal (i.e. of the bear).

6) Eustathius ad *Iliad* 2.772:

E: A man named Embaros played a subtle trick in prayer. For he set up the sanctuary of Munychian Artemis. And a bear

appeared in it and was slain by the Athenians, and so a plague arose. And for this the god (i.e. Apollo in an oracle) proclaimed that there would be a release (from the plague) if someone should sacrifice (*thusêi*) his daughter to Artemis. And Embaros (or Baros) promised he would do this on the condition that his family should have the priesthood (*hierôsune*) for life (= in perpetuity?). Dressing up his daughter completely (*diakosmêsas*), he hid her in the inner recess of the temple (*aduton*) and adorning a goat in clothing, he sacrificed it as if it were his daughter. For which he passed into a proverb: “You are an Embaros”, that is “clever” or “wise”.

First some general linguistic observations: there is clear evidence, as I have mentioned, that the noun *arktos* and the related verb *arkteuein* were used in classical Athens to refer to a ritual performed by girls or young women for Artemis. The verbal form varies from the active (*arkteuein*) and middle or passive (only in the participle *arkteumenai*), and the equation of the active *arkteuein* with the active verb *kathieroun* (Ha2 and He2: “to dedicate”) and with *dekateuein* (Ha2: “to pay as a tenth”, “to tithe”) suggests that the verb *arkteuein* may have different meanings in the active, middle and passive like *kathieroun*, which in the active voice means “to dedicate (something else),” in the middle “to dedicate (oneself)” and in the passive “to be dedicated.” In light of my argument below that the *arkteia* comprised a group of sacrificial and dedicatory rituals, the difference between the three voices of the verb may be a significant marker of the agency of the girls as dedicators or as dedications.⁴⁸ The sources are, however, somewhat inconsistent on this point and the difference in voices might also be explained as a feature of Greek verbs ending in *-euein*, where the active form refers to status or role (e.g. “to *be* a bear”) and the middle refers to actions that are appropriate to this status or role (e.g. “to *serve* or *act* as a bear”).⁴⁹ Although the related noun *arkteia* is (as far as I can discern) attested only once in extant Greek – as a lemma in Hesychius (He2, above) – I see no reason to doubt that it, too, was also used in the fifth century and that Hesychius and his sources are quoting it from some lost classical source.

If we focus on the descriptions of the girls and their activities, we find that there are two very different streams of information, one designed to explain the Aristophanic reference to “bears” at a Brauronian festival and the other aimed at interpreting the reference in a speech of Lysias to a private, perhaps pre-nuptial ceremony, that is closely connected with foundation myths about Artemis’ worship and priesthood at Brauron and Munychia. Although the Lysian speech is no longer extant, the stream of ancient commentary on it can in fact be traced back quite early in our sources, since it is preserved in the lexicon of the second-century CE writer Harpocration (Ha1 and Ha2), who in turn quotes as his source a commentary of the famous first-century BCE

grammarian Didymus Chalkentros (Ha2). On the other hand, of the extant ancient commentaries on the *Lysistrata* passage, that of the fifth-century CE scholar Hesychius is the earliest and most brief, while the more lengthy discussions are found in the even later scholia (L) or the tenth-century CE lexicon known as the *Suda* (S). Indeed, it is in these latest compilations that the originally separate strands of information have obviously become entangled; we find, for example, that the scholia to the *Lysistrata* and the *Suda* begin with a description of a communal festival (L1 and S1), which reminds them of the foundation myth (L2 and S2), which is then used to explain a private ceremony (L3 and S3). Although the close correspondences between the structure and content of the lexicographic tradition stemming from the Lysias passage (Ha1, Ha2 and B) and the second two parts of the scholiastic tradition on the *Lysistrata* (L2–3 and S2–3) clearly show the source of this confusion in the latter, modern scholars have, in fact, closely (and wrongly) followed the lead of the scholia and have failed to distinguish between these two traditions, an error that I hope to rectify in what follows by disentangling the two strands of information and discussing them separately.

In addition to the details reported by Aristophanes himself (the wearing of the saffron robe and the location at the Brauronia festival), the initial information given by the scholia (sections S1 and L1) clearly refers to some kind of communal ceremony that is described variously as a “festival” (S1: *beortê*), a “secret-rite” (L1: *mustêrion*), and twice as a “sacrifice” (L1: *thusia*),⁵⁰ which girls between the ages of five and ten (L1 and S1) celebrate jointly (note the communal emphasis in the prefix *sun-* of the verb *sunteleoun* in L1) for the purpose of placating the angry Artemis (S1: *ekmelissomenai*; L1: *apomelissomenai*). One source adds uniquely that the girls “imitate a bear” or “represent a bear” (L1: *arkton mimoumenai*) at this festival, suggesting that perhaps in their dress or in their actions the girls seemed bear-like. These sources are all apparently describing part of a festival of Artemis known as the Brauronia. Their testimony is confirmed by Hesychius, who in a passage ultimately drawn from the same tradition of commentary,⁵¹ provides the additional information that a goat was sacrificed (He1) – a detail that supports the designation of the ceremony as a *thusia* (L1). The same source (L1) also suggests that although this event involves a plurality of girls, it was not open to the general public: it calls this sacrifice a *mustêrion*, which most probably refers to some kind of restricted or secret ceremony (i.e. with no males present), but not necessarily a mystery cult into which a member was initiated, as some scholars insist.⁵² Indeed, the same source also tells us that the girls who “play the bear” are a selected, smaller group, chosen (L1: *epilegomenai*), presumably from a wider pool of girls between the ages of five and ten. We can, therefore, see the outlines of one type of ritual performed by the “bears”: a communal sacrifice of a goat at Brauron by girls or young women who wear saffron robes, who act or serve in an ursine role, and who are intent on pacifying Artemis.⁵³

There is, however, a second stream of conflicting information stemming, as I have said, from commentaries on Lysias' use of the verb *arkteuein*. This information usually (e.g. in S3, L3 and B) follows the story of the killing of the bear and claims that Athenian maidens (*parthenoi* in S3 and Ha1; "every *parthenos*" in L3; *korai* in B) were required to "play the bear" for Artemis at Brauron or Munychia before they could marry a man or cohabit with him (L1, Ha1 and B use the noun *gamos*; S3 uses the verb *sumoikizesthai*), either because Artemis commanded this (L3) or because the Athenians, who were suffering from a plague and had been commanded by an oracle, voted this in the assembly as a legal decree.⁵⁴ There are reasons to doubt that this ritual of "playing the bear" was, in fact, the same as that described in the tradition stemming from the Aristophanic scholia (S1, L1, and He1). First of all, there is no mention in this second tradition of any communal animal sacrifice,⁵⁵ of any Brauronian festival, of any age limitation, of any secret ceremony or of any select group – indeed, the idea of limiting the rite to a select group of girls is not at all consistent with a public decree that all girls who intend to marry must "play the bear." This second kind of ritual, moreover, could apparently be performed at both the Brauronian and the Munychian sanctuaries of Artemis.

The young women who perform this second and apparently private ceremony are, moreover, described as "dedicated" to the goddess (Ha1 and B: *kathierôthenai*; Ha2: *kathierôsai*; and He2: *kathieroun*), as "expiating themselves" (B: *aphosiôsasthai*), as "paying a tithe" (Ha2: *dekateusai*) or as performing a service at the temple (L3: *peribepeîn to hieron*). Only one source (L3) says that they wore the saffron robe. Hesychius, moreover, in the same place where he equates "playing the bear" with the act of dedication (He2: *kathieroun*), calls the *arkteia* a *teletê*, a word that generally means "rite", often an "initiation rite". Hesychius' definition has, of course, been seized upon by scholars who argue for the existence of "bear mysteries" (see note 2), but in Athens, if we can trust a decree embedded in a speech in the Demosthenic corpus, the word *teletê* could also refer to a priesthood or sacred office.⁵⁶

The differences between these two types of ursine service can best be seen in Table 3.1. It is interesting to note that the only explicit crossovers between these two types of activities are: the "bear" terminology and the saffron robe. One might be tempted to explain the double appearance of the robe as the peculiar confusion of the scholiast to the *Lysistrata* (L), who alone reports that the young woman in the private ceremony also wore the *krokotos*. It is, however, much easier to explain the confusion between these two rituals in the very late sources if they did indeed share more than one common feature: indeed the saffron robe is precisely the kind of shared vivid detail that might precipitate such a confusion. We should also note that the ages of the girls may not be as far apart as the chart suggests, for the stipulation that they undertake the personal service "before marriage" need not mean that they did so immediately before they got married. Indeed, Harpocration's suggestion that

Table 3.1 Comparison of the *Brauronia* and the *arkteia*

name:	<i>Brauronia</i>	<i>arkteia</i>
fifth-century source of information	<i>Lysistrata</i> 644–5	lost speech of Lysias
Greek terms for activity	<i>heortê</i> , <i>thusia</i> <i>mustêrion</i>	<i>teletê</i>
main activity	communal sacrifice or service	individual dedication
age	between five and ten	before marriage
dress	saffron robe	saffron robe
ursine connection	to be a “bear” (<i>arktos</i>)	“to play or serve as a bear ” (<i>arkteuein</i>)
goal	placating Artemis (to prevent citywide plague or famine)	dedication; payment; self-expiation; paying a tithe (to prevent citywide plague or famine)

“to play the bear” was a form of tithing (i.e. giving up a tenth of what one has) and concerned with the private service to the goddess, may in fact allude to a much younger period of service – one that indeed needed to be completed by the end of the girl’s tenth year.⁵⁷

The suggestion that these “bears” as a form of personal dedication undertook a sacred office (He2: *teletê*) perhaps involving care of the temple (L3) raises a further possible source for this confusion over what precisely was meant by the verb *arkteuein*, for in several Greek cults, temple personnel are named after animals. The Greeks, for example, apparently called a priest of Aphrodite on Cyprus a “ram” (*ktilos*), a ritual cupbearer in Poseidon’s temple at Ephesus a “bull” (*tauros*), priestesses of Demeter and Persephone in Messene “fillies” (*pôloi*), and priestesses in Ephesus, Dodona or Delphi “bees” (*essenēs* or *melissai*).⁵⁸ More importantly, an inscription reveals that there was a cult official of Artemis at Cyrene called a “bear” (*arkos*) who performed sacrifices on behalf of other women.⁵⁹ None of the evidence for these various animal-named priests and priestesses suggests, however, that they ever “acted like” or “imitated” an animal in any obvious manner, a fact that suggests to me that in the context of temple service, at least, we might translate the verb *arkteuein* less dramatically as “to serve as bear”, i.e. “serve in the priestly office of bear.” Such an admittedly bland translation has the virtue of explaining: (i) the variation in our sources between the active and middle forms of the verb, the former referring to the role (“to be a bear”) and the latter to the activities

appropriate to the role (“to perform the duties of a bear”);⁶⁰ and (ii) explaining why the two very different activities summarized in Table 3.1 (communal sacrifice and personal temple service) could both be the activities of a “bear”.

Several Hellenistic inscriptions from the coast of Thessaly support this idea that the “bears” at Brauron served temporarily as priestesses or cultic servants of some kind, since they suggest that in Artemis sanctuaries there young women similarly “served as fawns” for the goddess.⁶¹ The first and somewhat corrupt inscription was found in the town of Pagasae-Demetrias on the shore of the gulf of Pagasae, and most probably came from the goddess’ temple there; it reads: “Dunatis, daughter of Melanthius, having served as a fawn (*nebeus[a]*) for Artemis Pagasitis.” Three more inscriptions of this type have turned up in recent years in or near the Thessalian town of Atrax.⁶² The fifth and remaining inscription of this type is, however, the most revealing: discovered in Larisa, it reads: “Hippolochos, son of Hippolochos, (dedicates this) to Artemis Thrôsia as “ransom” (*lutra*) on behalf of Eubioteia, daughter of Alexippus, who served as a fawn (*nebeusansas*).” Since a later inscription reveals that the Hippolochus and Eubioteia were subsequently married, Clement (1934) is probably right to see the ransom here as proof that the young woman was thought to be the property of Artemis while she served the goddess. This usage, of course recalls both Harpocraton’s equation of “serving as a bear” with “paying a tithe” (Ha2) and the oracular injunction recorded in another source (S3) that the Athenians “as payments (*poînai*) for the slain bear” should force their own daughters to “play the bear.”⁶³ In short, the Athenians regularly pay back the goddess for the loss of her bear by “sacrificing” or “dedicating” their daughters for a fixed period of time.

This image of the Athenians (the fathers of the girls presumably) dedicating a portion – perhaps a tenth (see note 57) – of their daughters’ youth to the goddess in this manner, fits in rather well with two important myths that are concerned with Artemis and the sacrifice of daughters: those concerning Iphigeneia at Aulis and others about Embaros’ daughter at Munychia. Since both of these myths are well known and have been carefully studied many times, I will simply summarize them in Table 3.2.⁶⁴

Scholars have long noted that these various foundation myths serve as explanations (*aitia*) for at least three things: (i) a priestess serving Artemis in her temple as a “bear” or “fawn” to commemorate or replace an animal similarly “dedicated” to Artemis and wrongly slain; (ii) an inherited family line for the priesthood, often traceable to the daughter of the man who kills the animal substituted for his daughter (e.g. Agamemnon or Embaros); and (iii) a type of substitute sacrifice of a goat, perhaps dressed as a human girl and called “daughter”. In light of my earlier argument that our view of the Brauronian rites not be tainted by the Peloponnesian image of Artemis the hunter, it is crucial to point out that although the most popular extant version of the story (the sacrifice of Iphigeneia at Aulis) traces its cause back to a hunting accident and clearly involves Artemis as a huntress, this is never a

Table 3.2 Summary of myths about Artemis

	Human crime	Artemis reacts	Artemis demands	Substitution	Present service
<i>Cypria</i> (Epic cycle) Soph. <i>Electra</i>	Ag. kills deer (<i>elaphos</i>) in sanctuary and boasts he is a better hunter than Artemis	storm prevents expedition from Aulis	Ag. must sacrifice Iphigeneia	<i>elaphos</i> substituted for maiden; maiden becomes priestess of Artemis	[connected with “playing the fawn” in Thessalian sanctuaries?]
Phanodemus (also L2)	Ag. (Theseus?) kills bear (<i>arktos</i>) in the sanctuary of Artemis	storm prevents expedition from Brauron	Ag. must sacrifice Iphigeneia	<i>arktos</i> substituted for maiden; maiden becomes priestess of Artemis	be an <i>arktos</i> for Iphigeneia or Artemis at Brauron
Scholia and Lexica (S2–3 and L3)	boys kill bear (<i>arktos</i>) in sanctuary at Brauron	plague or famine	girls must be an <i>arktos</i> for Artemis		be a servant/an <i>arktos</i> for Artemis at Brauron
Lexica and Eustathius (E)	Athenians kill bear (<i>arktos</i>) in the sanctuary at Munychia	plague	father must sacrifice daughter	Embaros dresses goat and substitutes for daughter	goat sacrifice at Munychia; women in Embaros’ family are priestesses for Artemis
Lexicon (B)	Young men kill bear (<i>arktos</i>) in the Piraeus	plague	sacrifice a maiden to pay back loss of bear	man calls a goat “daughter” and sacrifices it, while hiding daughter in <i>aduton</i> .	women dedicate themselves as “bears” to Artemis before marriage; sacrifice goat to Artemis

factor in the local Athenian stories and has rightly been dismissed by scholars as the creative invention of epic poets who transported to Aulis a local Peloponnesian story and combined it with a local cult *aition*.⁶⁵

When considered within the broad range of Greek religious rituals, then, the various rites connected with “playing the bear” or “serving as bear” at Brauron and Munychia can be explained by three somewhat different models of ritual activity, all of which fit much more comfortably under the rubric of

“sacrifice” or “appeasement” than “initiation”, and which have much clearer Ionian or Aegean (not Peloponnesian) parallels:

- a communal ceremony performed originally to avert a crisis and then to commemorate annually the successful aversion of a crisis, in which the community sacrifices one or some of its own to protect itself from mass destruction threatened by a plague or a famine, for example: the *pharmakos*-ritual performed in Athens and widely in the Ionic world or the sacrifice and the *paean* performed by young male worshippers in Ionia, who aim to placate Apollo, so he will spare them and their fellow citizens from destruction;
- a state-mandated albeit private pre-nuptial ceremony (often called the *proteleia*) performed by the bride or the bride and groom together before the wedding, often in a shrine to Artemis, with the goal of protecting the bride herself from that dangerous goddess, either generally or more specifically in the dangers of childbirth; this usually includes a sacrifice of some sort, especially the cutting of hair which is metonymic for the young woman’s life.⁶⁶ The only extant parallels for a state *mandating* such a ceremony are from within the Ionic/Aegean realm (Cos and Cyrene, a Thera colony). There is no evidence, however, that this *proteleia* rite “prepared” young women for marriage in any initiatory fashion; it simply appeased a dangerous goddess.⁶⁷
- temple service of a presumably limited duration, like the *arrêphoroi* who serve Athena at Athens or the “fawns” who serve Artemis in Thessaly. As discussed above, this “serving as a bear or fawn” was apparently seen as a kind of sacrificial “payment” to the goddess in lieu of the girl’s life. We see this sacrificial focus most clearly in the myths about Embaros sacrificing his daughter at Munychia or Agamemnon slaughtering his at Brauron or Aulis, which all end in the foundation of a female priesthood at these sites.⁶⁸

It seems clear, then, that there is no need to invoke an initiatory model for understanding any of these three types of service to Artemis, all which are clearly sacrificial. Indeed, it has recently been argued that the peripheral placement of Artemis’ sanctuaries, sometimes cited as additional proof of the initiatory focus of her rites at Brauron, may in fact have been designed to stress the *sacrificial* nature of the cult, because it potentially or symbolically put in harm’s way the Athenian girls who serve the goddess there.⁶⁹

In the past scholars have sidestepped the obviously sacrificial nature of these kinds of service by arguing that “at the center of all initiation rites there was sacrifice,” but this argument is closely tied with a popular hypothesis about the origins of all Greek sacrifice in the *Männerbund* of Paleolithic hunters, who were “initiated” into their groups by ceremonies that involve the communal killing of the hunted animal, a shared sense of guilt, and then

the restoration of the animal through sacrifice.⁷⁰ Since this theory has been gradually discredited and abandoned, we must try to rethink individual forms of sacrifice on their own terms. In this essay, I have argued that aversive sacrifice – that is sacrifice to placate a deity who is normatively hostile and angry – is generally popular in the Attic and Ionic cults of Artemis and Apollo and (more specifically) lies at the heart of all of the activities performed by the Brauronian bears. In its communal form – for example, selected young men (*kouroi*) slaughtering oxen to Apollo and singing the paeon around the altar or the selected girls (*kourai* or *parthenoi*) dressed in saffron robes and sacrificing a goat to Artemis at Brauron – there is nothing peculiarly initiatory about it, except the superficial detail of youthful performers. And even in its most metonymic forms – for example, the private offering of cut hair, or in myth the sacrifice of an animal instead of a daughter – the shadow of human sacrifice cannot simply be equated with the idea of sacrifice that one sometimes finds in initiations connected with mystery cult. Indeed, as we have seen, these forms of ritual obviously form a subset of the much larger general category of self-sacrifice designed to appease angry gods and ward off destruction.⁷¹

In the final analysis, then, the continued focus of Brauronian and Munychian cult and myth on the safety of the city from plague and famine suggests communal not individual concerns. We do not, moreover, find any concern expressed for the successful growth or development of the girls as *individuals*, a central feature in initiation rites cross-culturally. Nor are there any signs of any important qualitative changes in their status or self-awareness or their entry into a new group. To assume that there was some such individual growth or preparation or experience would be similar to suggesting that the *pharmakos* chased out of Ionian towns under the vague threat of death also underwent some kind of initiatory experience. The focus in each case is on a gift dedicated to a god, not on the internal experience of the gift.⁷²

Some brief conclusions

It would appear, then, that the word “bear” and the verb “to play or serve as a bear” could be used to describe three different kinds of service to the goddess, one communal in its performance and expected benefit and the others personal. It seems clear that a select group of five to ten-year-old girls dressed in saffron robes gathered at Brauron apart from the men for a communal sacrifice of a goat aimed at warding off the anger of Artemis, the bringer of plague – a ritual that is similar to the aversive paeon and sacrifice performed by young men (*kouroi*) to placate the anger of Apollo. On the other hand, there were also forms of self-dedication performed individually (probably also in a saffron robe) by every Athenian *parthenos* at some point before she got married. We know considerably less about these private rites, which apparently were not limited to the Brauronian temple. They are described as

acts of self-devotion or self-expiation designed to placate the (potential) anger of Artemis at the individual woman herself – anger that might be manifested in Artemis’ habit of killing young women generally or more specifically in childbirth. Parallels suggest that this service as a bear took the form of substitute sacrifice (e.g. a goat) or a metonymic sacrifice (e.g. some hairs or an article of clothing), as well as some kind of temporary work for the goddess in her shrine at Brauron or Munychia. The much later scholiasts and lexicographers seem to have conflated these two different kinds of ursine service because both probably involved donning a saffron robe and perhaps a sacrifice to Artemis. But neither, as we have seen, was in any way concerned with an age-grade initiation, a mystery cult or with any kind of preparation for or indoctrination about marriage. Rather both were forms of sacrifice designed to placate the deadly anger of Artemis and to ward off either the general threat to the city of plague and famine, or the more specific threat of death in childbirth to young women who were about to be married.⁷³

Notes

- 1 E.g. Brelich (1969) 247–79; Burkert (1985) 151 and 263; Henrichs (1981) 207; Simon (1983) 83–8; Cole (1984) 238–44; Bremmer (1994) 69; and Calame (1997) 99. Of the two translations given above, the latter would stress the service of the young woman as a priestess or cultic attendant (see below note 6), while the former seems to imply some kind of mimesis of the bear or ritual actions, e.g. Cole (1984) 240–1, or a mimesis more generally of the she-bear’s cycle of hibernation, Perlman (n. 52 below).
- 2 Lonsdale (1993) 191–3, for example, argues that the *arkteia* was a mystery celebration and initiation aimed at “the spiritual transformation of a young girl from a wild disorderly creature . . . to a tame and nubile being”; he sees a general movement from fear and flight from the bear (a revelation and then races) to the group solidarity signified by orderly dancing as a chorus. He suggests that “at a climactic phase in the Arkteia ritual, a priestess wearing a bear mask . . . was presented to the girls made impressionable by ecstatic dancing” – a feature of the “ritual terrorization of initiates” similar to that suggested for the frightening masks found at the Spartan Orthia sanctuary. Kahil and Perlman also interpret the *arkteia* as a mystery cult, but they seem to have something more Eleusinian in mind, see note 52 below.
- 3 Vernant (1991) 218–19, for example, seems to see it primarily as a pre-nuptial ritual in which the girls are “tamed” for their husbands. For the language of “preparation” see, e.g. Cole (1984) 243 (“ . . . prepared the young women for adult sexual responsibilities”) and 244 (“ . . . they were preparing for duties and occupations deeply important to the social and economic life of the city”), Henderson (n. 5) and Calame (n. 67).
- 4 Price (1999) 17 and 94, suggests the term “initiation” is too general to be applied in this case, but claims that the bear ritual shows that “girls require ritual transformation to become women.” Cole (1998) 27, accepts the initiatory importance of the rite, but thinks that much more is going on: “The rites of young women at [Artemis’ frontier sanctuaries] marked important transitions in the female life-cycle, but signified more than the individual female’s safe passage across a personal biological boundary.”
- 5 Henderson (1987) 156: “Like the *arrhephoras*, service as an *arktos* was a great distinction

- and in origin initiatory (specifically a preparation for marriage).” Cf. Sourvinou (1971) 342: “The *arrêphoria* and the *arkteia* seem clearly to be, in classical Athens, ‘initiatory survivals’ . . .”
- 6 For example Parke (1977) 139–40 or Dillon (1999) 74–5, who asserts “the *Lysistrata* passage does not reveal a series of initiations . . . but rather select service to the goddess.”
 - 7 See Ferrari and Dodd in this volume.
 - 8 See Graf in this volume.
 - 9 Lewis (1980) 205; for the helpfulness of Lewis’ formulation, see Graf and Leitaο in this volume.
 - 10 In this I follow Parke (1977) 139–40, who sees the *arkteia* as a rite of appeasement and never mentions the word initiation. See, too, the most recent thoughts of Burkert (1996) 75, who acknowledges that the mythological evidence points unequivocally to sacrifice: “With the *arkteia* we come as close as possible to female puberty initiation, but we have difficulties finding the expected myth. Instead of it, we are confronted with different mythical patterns that seek explanation in terms of divine wrath and expiatory sacrifice.”
 - 11 *Lysistrata* 644–5. I translate the manuscript reading “wearing (*echousa*) the saffron robe.” In recent years, scholars have split on the question: in his influential text, Henderson (1987) loc. cit. prints the emendation “shedding (*cheousa*) the saffron robe” which was originally proposed by Sourvinou (1971) and then improved by Stinton (1976). Their argument is influenced by the naked girls on the *krateriskoi* (see below n. 14) who (it is argued) have already shed their robes, and the fact that in one version of her story, Iphigeneia sheds a saffron gown just before she is sacrificed (Aesch. *Ag.* 239). Many scholars have, however, resisted this emendation, as I do, e.g.: Cole (1984) 240; Perlman (1989) 118 n. 19; and Hamilton (1989) 460 n. 26. Lloyd-Jones (1983) 92 translates the unemended text: “. . . then I had my *krokotos*”, but in n. 92 grants that the emendation “may be right.” The emendation is undeniably elegant (it only involves the transposition of a single letter), but there are at least two problems with it: there is no sign in the vase paintings of the *krokotos* (worn or lying shed on the ground), and although all of the ancient commentators on the passage (see the translations in the next section) speak of the girls *wearing* the *krokotos*, none of them mention the fact that the girls – at some point in the ritual – *shed* it, a detail that I would expect them to mention if the text in front of them actually had *cheousa*.
 - 12 Brelich (1969) 229–311. On the subsequent whittling down of Brelich’s four initiations to one (the *arkteia*) see e.g. Sourvinou (1971) 342, who rejects the initiatory aspects of the “corn-grinding” and the “basket carrying”, and Graf, in this volume, who discusses recent work on the *arrêphoria*.
 - 13 Frag. 82 (Thallman), cited by Harpocration, s.v. *arkteusai*, who tells us that the comic writer Craterus also used the verb in a lost play and that Euripides and Aristophanes both used the noun in lost plays; see idem s.v. *dekatensai*, for the equation *dekatensai* = *arkteusai*. Both of these texts are translated in full and discussed in the second part of this chapter.
 - 14 See Kahil (1983), Dowden (1989) 27–32, Hamilton (1989), Lonsdale (1993) 188–90, and Calame (1995) 99–100. For full color illustrations and additional bibliography see Reeder (1995) 321–8.
 - 15 For example, Kahil (1983), Perlman (1989) or Reeder (1995) 321–8.
 - 16 For example, Kahil (1983), Dowden (1989) 27–32, Lonsdale (1993) 188–90, and Reeder (1995) 321–8.

- 17 Simon (1983) 87–8, believes that these red-figured scenes do not show cultic activity (as the black-figured ones do) but rather they depict a variant of the Arcadian Callisto story; Hamilton (1989) concurs and argues rightly that they should be excluded from the series of black-figured scenes on various other grounds as well.
- 18 On this point, see Lonsdale (1993) 186–7.
- 19 Dowden (1989), points out the parallels between the Brauronian bears and the “Sixteen Women” at Elis, who weave a robe for Hera (like the *arrêphoroi* do for Athena at Athens) and who arrange races for women at the games for Hera at Olympia. See Hamilton (1989) 470–71, for other instances of female races at Peloponnesian festivals for Artemis and Dionysus. Clark (1999) 21, thinks that these races are initiatory, also, and uses the Brauronian scenes to support her argument. Shapiro (1988) 65, argues rightly that the scenes on the black-figured *krateriskoi* probably depict secret rites, because their iconography is peculiar to paintings from Attic Artemisia. Secret rites are not, however, always initiations; see below note 52.
- 20 See, e.g., Lloyd-Jones (1983) 98 and Lonsdale (1993) 173–4.
- 21 Lincoln (1981a) 99–102 suggests a different set of three stages for female initiation rites: enclosure, metamorphosis/magnification and emergence. Perlman (1989) 122–3, in an essay that explores the question why the girls imitate a bear at Brauron, suggests that the life-cycle of a she-bear fits the van Gennep pattern, in that she mates and then *withdraws* into her cave, is then *transformed* into a mother by pregnancy and birth, and then returns with her cubs. In fact, the three-stage cycle she describes is much closer to Lincoln’s scheme than van Gennep’s.
- 22 See, e.g., Lloyd-Jones (1983) 91–2 and 96–7, who argues that the ritual death of the “bears” at Brauron “marked the end of the girls’ lives as children and their entry into the adult world” as did the ritual death of the male initiand at Halai.
- 23 Cole (1984) 243 points out, however, that Vidal-Naquet himself would not have approved of the extension of his work on male initiations into the realm of the female, for he argued strongly that there could be no rituals of initiation marking a change in their status because women had no political rights.
- 24 For example, Lloyd-Jones (1983) 93 (by analogy to the *arrêphoroi*). Simon (1983) 86 argues, however, that the *arkteia* was performed at all of Artemis’ Attic sanctuaries and therefore it was possible for all Athenian girls to perform the rite simultaneously in different places.
- 25 Dowden (1989) 26; see also Burkert (1983) 150–4 (on the *arrêphoroi*) and Price (1999) 94–5 (on both *arktoi* and *arrêphoroi*). Other scholars suggest a similar evolutionary process, without arguing for historical necessity, see above note 6.
- 26 See Graf’s essay in this volume for a thoughtful critique of similar approaches to the *arrêphoria*, especially the work of Donnay (1997), and of his own earlier (1978) interpretation of the ritual of the Locrian maidens, another frequent candidate among scholars for “representative initiation.”
- 27 Faraone (1992) 57–63.
- 28 For example: in Eumaeus’ reminiscence of his childhood home on the island of “Syria”, the twin gods deliver with their arrows peaceful (i.e. swift) deaths to the elderly (*Od.* 15.407–11); the sudden, violent deaths of Niobe’s children are also attributed to their marksmanship (*Il.* 24. 605–6).
- 29 There are, of course, exceptions to this general role. In the description of the deaths of Bellerophon’s children, Artemis kills the daughter, but it is Ares (not Apollo) who kills

- the son (*Il.* 6.203–5). On the throne of the Amyclaeon Apollo and in a statue group dedicated by the Cnidians at Delphi, both of the twins were shown shooting at Tityus (Paus. 3.18.15 and 10.11.1), and Artemis alone kills Orion (*Od.* 5.124–5).
- 30 Simon (1983) 73–88 helpfully discusses Athenian rituals concerned with Apollo and Artemis and stresses their close connection with Aegean and Ionic rites.
- 31 *Iliad* 1.472–4. On the Erythrean paean, see Käppel (1992) 189–206 and 372–4.
- 32 On Didyma, see Faraone (1992) 6 and on Miletus, see Burkert (1985) 102.
- 33 Simon (1983) 79–81 and Parke (1977) 136.
- 34 Hamilton (1989) 459.
- 35 Peppas Delmousou (1988) 257.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Burkert's assertions, (1985) 149–52, that Artemis was “always and everywhere the goddess of hunters and hunting” (p. 149), who “presides over hunting and the initiation of girls” (p. 151) have been enormously influential on scholars working on the Brauronian bears (see n. 42 below). But unlike his very balanced portrayal of Apollo (see next note) his description of this pan-hellenic Artemis fails to give any sense at all of the different manner in which the goddess was worshipped by the Ionian Greeks; it is, moreover, badly distorted by his desire at that time (some thirty years ago) to trace the origins of all Greek sacrifice to hunting rituals (see note 42 below).
- 38 Burkert (1985) 143–9 carefully distinguishes three different components of Apolline worship: a Dorian-northwest Greek component (generally concerned with tribal and phratry gatherings and ephebic initiations); a Cretan-Minoan component (centered on healing and purification); and a Syro-Hittite component that worshipped him as a bow-bearing plague god – a component that was borrowed and developed by the Anatolian and Ionian Greeks.
- 39 For example, Redfield (1990) esp. 119–24, on the rituals performed in honor of Artemis Triklaria at Patras, or Hamilton (1989) on the rites of Artemis Orthia at Sparta.
- 40 *LIMC* s.v. “Callisto”.
- 41 Henrichs (1981) 199–203 (the quotation is from p. 202).
- 42 Burkert (1983) 12–14, following the work of his teacher Karl Meuli. The book was originally published in 1972, and its impact on Brauronian inquiries is clearly visible in, e.g. Lloyd-Jones (1983) 98–9 and Simon (1983) 85–6. Smith (1987) argues effectively against this theory and summarizes the problems with the now discredited evidence for Paleolithic bear sacrifices, which Burkert (1996) 150–1 no longer cites in his most recent treatment.
- 43 The evidence is collected by Clement (1934) and will be discussed below.
- 44 With the exception of the possible appearance on a fragment of a red-figured Attic *krateriskos* of the Brauronian type (see note 17 above), her story never appears in Attic vase-paintings (only on Apulian, see *LIMC* s.v. “Callistos” nos. 5–8) and first appears in Athens in a pair of statues of Io and Callisto by Deinomenes which date to the beginning of the fourth century.
- 45 There was, for example, a very important Athenian festival of Artemis Agrotera (“Huntress”) and Enyalios (a war god similar to Ares) at Agrai, which was clearly a military rite of sorts commemorating the battle of Marathon; it was overseen by a polemarch and included a procession of ephebes in armor, but females seem to have been excluded; see Parke (1977) 125, Simon (1983) 82 and Parker (1996) 153. Far less important was the festival of Artemis Elaphebolion (“Deer Slayer”), which probably

- was originally an important hunters' ritual at which stags were sacrificed by men, but by the fifth century this festival had declined greatly in importance and the animal sacrifice had been replaced by the offering of cakes molded in the shape of stags. It is important to note, therefore, that although Artemis is depicted (with bow and arrow) as a huntress in both traditions, in the Ionic-Aegean realm she hunts girls and women, whereas in other parts of Greece she hunts animals in the company of women or nymphs.
- 46 Parker (1996) 270 n. 62.
- 47 The Greek is difficult here and it is unclear how "the goddess" in the dative is to be construed. Sale (1975) 275 n. 13 very tentatively takes it with the adjective "tame": "made tame for the goddess".
- 48 The verb *dekateuein* similarly means "to offer as a tithe" (active) and "to be offered as a tithe" (passive). In this light, it may be that fifth-century authors distinguished the active form of the verb (= "to dedicate as bears") the subject of which is a family or father, from the passive ("to be dedicated as bears"), the subject of which is a girl. This is especially clear in Harpocration's discussion (Ha2), where he first quotes a phrase from Demosthenes about some *parthenos*: "... not to tithe (*dekateusai*) or initiate (*muēsai*) her" and then goes on to quote from Lysias's speech (probably also about a *parthenos*, the daughter of Phrynichus) the fact that the verb *dekateusai* was equivalent to *arkteusai*. From this sequence, we can probably assume that just as fathers and husbands can "initiate" women into the Eleusinian mysteries, they could also "tithe" them and "cause them to play or serve as the bear" (all in the active voice).
- 49 Smyth, *Greek Grammar* 1728b: the active indicates a status or role (e.g. *polituein* = "to be a citizen"), whereas the middle signifies that the subject is acting in a manner appropriate to this status or role (e.g. *polituesthai* = "to act as a citizen; to perform one's civic duties"). In this light *arkteuein* would mean "to be a bear" and *arkteusthai* would mean "to act as a bear; to perform the rituals of a bear."
- 50 LSJ Suppl. (1996) s.v. *arkteia* (= He1 in this essay) understand this as a singular form of a female abstract noun meaning "service as an *arktos*" and Price (1999) 90 translates it as "bear-ritual". This noun, as far as I can tell, appears only here in all extant Greek.
- 51 The lemma in He1, *Braurōniois* (note the dative plural ending), probably comes originally from a scholiast's comment on the phrase used in the *Lysistrata* passage: *arktos ē Braurōniois*.
- 52 Kahil (1983) 93 thinks that the *arkteia* was, in fact, a mystery cult of the "bear goddess". Perlman (1989) 240, agrees, stressing the fact that the *arkteia* is called a *mustērion* and a *teletē*, and imagines that while "playing the bear", young women imitated the hibernation of the she-bear, by retreating (in archaic times) into a cave-like structure at Brauron and in later times into the *adyton* of the temple, where they were transformed in a sacred drama that ended with them putting on the saffron robe, a garment appropriate for marriageable women and mothers. Both of these scholars clearly are using the Eleusinian Telesterion and its sacred drama as a model.
- 53 Lloyd-Jones (1983) 92.
- 54 S3: *epsēphisanto*, a detail that may perhaps be corroborated by Harpocration, who cites Craterus' lost play *Psēphismata*, "The Decrees" (Ha1). Dillon (1999) 74–5, thinks that it is unlikely that the *arkteia* was a compulsory pre-marital rite, although he has evidence for similar state-mandated ceremonies at Cos and Cyrene (a colony of Thera) – could this be another shared feature of the Ionian/Aegean worship of Artemis?
- 55 The lexicographical note in Bekker (B) says that in this pre-marital ceremony the

- parthenos* “made a sacrifice” (*thusai*), but this probably refers to a private *proteleia* offering (see n. 66).
- 56 Demosthenes 59.104; see LSJ s.v. *teletê* III “a priesthood or sacred office”.
- 57 Harpocration’s explanation (Ha2), that *arktenein* = *dekatenein* because the girls were ten years old when they “played the bear,” is obviously wrong, as scholars have long noted, e.g. Brelich (1969) 266. If, however, we understand that the girls had to serve as bears for a whole year before they turned eleven, they would, in fact, (at least symbolically) be giving up a tenth of their life up to that point. This understanding of *dekatenein*, moreover, is consistent with the description of the communal service at the Brauronia of selected girls between the ages of five and ten, i.e. they had to give-up a year of their life before they completed their tenth year. Another obvious possibility is that the concept of a “tithe” here is as mathematically imprecise in Greek as it is in modern English; the Greek word *dekas*, for example, usually means “a tenth”, but can be used loosely to mean “a select group”, see LSJ Suppl. (1996) s.v.
- 58 Brelich (1969) 259. For a more detailed discussion, see Morpogo (1960) 30–40, who discusses a passage in Pindar that describes Kinryas as the *hieria ktilon* of Aphrodite. Hesychius s.v. *pôlia*, mentions the priestesses of the Leukippides, and two inscriptions call the priestesses of Demeter and Persephone in Messene *pôloi* (IG 5.1.59 and 1444). The word *pôlia* may, in fact, be a formulation equivalent to the word *arkteia*, which is also a lemma in Hesychius: both would presumably mean “service as a bear” or “service as a filly”. For the “bulls (*tauroi*), see Athenaeus 425c and for the “bees”, see Pindar, *Pyth.* 4.60 and frag. 158 (Snell).
- 59 SEG 9.1.74; note that Cyrene was a colonial foundation of the Aegean island of Thera and as such properly belongs within the realm of Aegean and Ionic ritual.
- 60 See note 49 above.
- 61 The inscriptions all use forms of the word *nebeusa*, apparently an aorist participle of an unattested verb **nebeuein*, which itself implies the existence of an unattested noun **nebos*, an epichoric equivalent of the common Greek word *nebros* (“fawn”). See Clement (1934); Dowden (1989) 41–2, and most recently Kajava (1999) 17–18.
- 62 IG 9.2.240 (“Antipatra, daughter of Kleuges, who served as a fawn to Artemis”); 489 (“Nikê, daughter of Nikagoras, who served as a fawn”); and 493 (“Aichelochis, daughter of Pythagoras, who served as a fawn, dedicates (this) to Artemis”). The last example uses a compound form of the participle: *epine[b]eusassa*.
- 63 An inscription from Cyrene (where a priestess of Artemis is called a “bear”; see note 59) also commands new brides to pay a “penalty” (*zamia*) to Artemis before going to their marriage bed; this “penalty”, moreover, may have involved an activity, not money – in this case a ritual descent into the underground *nymphaion* of Artemis – see Perlman (1989) 128–9.
- 64 Table 3.2 summarizes the excellent work of Sale (1975), Lloyd-Jones (1983), Dowden (1989), and Vernant (1991).
- 65 Sale (1975) 274–84 and Lloyd-Jones (1983) 87–9.
- 66 Dillon (1999) 71–4 gives a thorough and up-to-date list of the primary references to *proteleia* rituals; on the metonymy of hair-cutting rituals, see Versnel (1977) and Leitaio in this volume. Burkert (1996) 34–54, also discusses of the range of metonymic sacrifice from “finger sacrifice” (symbolically by dedicating rings) to scapegoat rituals.
- 67 In addition to the scholars mentioned above in notes 3 and 5 above, Calame (1997) 99, claims that “the sources *explicitly* report that the intention of this service is to *prepare* the

young woman for marriage” (with my emphases). The sources, however, say only that they must “play the bear” before marriage, with the implied threat that they or perhaps the whole city will perish if the rite is ignored; we have no information on what effect the ceremony has on the woman herself or how it prepares her for marriage. Burkert (1985) 151, I think, comes closer to the truth, when he suggests that the temple service of the Brauronian “bears” and the simpler *proteleia* offerings to Artemis should both be regarded as “advance purchase of freedom from the power of the virgin goddess.” Service as a “basket bearer” (*kanéphoros*) was similarly designed to protect a young woman: “For women who are about to be married are accustomed to carry baskets for Artemis in expiation (*aphosiōsis*) for their maidenhood, in fear that they might be the object of her wrath” (Scholia to Theocritus 2.66).

- 68 This has been profitably discussed, by Sale (1975), Lloyd-Jones (1983), Burkert (1985) 152, and Vernant (1991) 207–19.
- 69 Cole (1998) 40–1, points out that myths and historical anecdotes suggest that the threat of kidnapping by pirates or military enemies at Artemis’ extramural shrines was a real threat, averted only by the continued appeasement of and good relations with the goddess.
- 70 The quotation is from Lloyd-Jones (1983) 98. For the gradual abandonment of the Meuli-Burkert hunting thesis, see note 42 above.
- 71 Versnel (1977). For a parallel case where rites of initiation, temple service and appeasement get confused in modern interpretation, see Johnston’s discussion (1997) of the Corinthian rites for Hera Akraia, which include the year-long sacrifice of seven boys and girls to the goddess. Certain features of the cult – the children cut their hair and wear black – suggested to Brelich and others that the rites were initiatory in nature, but Johnston stresses that in fact the purpose is to appease Hera’s anger over the killing of Medea’s children in her temple; here, too, temple service is the equivalent of a sacrifice that returns the two children who in myth had been given over to the goddess and who need to be replaced each year.
- 72 Indeed, we have seen (n. 57) that even the peculiar focus in some sources on the age of the participants should perhaps not be used as evidence of an initiation tied to a particular age-grade, but rather it points to the mathematics of tithing, a very old Greek sacrificial idea.
- 73 This paper began its life as a presentation to a memorable graduate seminar at the University of Chicago co-taught by Gloria Ferrari, Laura Slatkin and myself on “Text, Image and the Representation of Ritual in Ancient Greece.” I thank Gloria and Laura, Fritz Graf (a regular participant in the seminar), and our wonderful students (especially Ian Moyer and Cecily Hilsdale) for their stimulating comments and criticisms.

Part III

VIDAL-NAQUET'S BLACK
HUNTER

ADOLESCENT INITIATION IN MYTH AND TRAGEDY

Rethinking the Black Hunter

David B. Dodd

The scholar of Greek tragedy or myth today is likely to treat anthropological models of adolescent initiation as a solid and practical body of knowledge to use in developing interpretations.¹ This relatively recent state of affairs reflects, in the most general way, the fact that two of the defining features of adolescent initiation, the adolescence of the initiand and the symbolic marginality through which he is initiated, are social phenomena that have become increasingly of interest to social scientists over the last century. While there has always been a certain awareness of adolescence as a category, in fields as distinct as medicine and history, ethnological interest in the adolescent initiation rites of non-Western societies increased in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and sociological and psychological interest in the changing roles of Western adolescents developed into an industry after World War II. Marginality only became a formal concern in the twentieth century, in the work of such scholars as the anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep and the sociologist Robert E. Park, but it too has had a diverse history in the different social sciences. While it generally reflects sociological models of communities as entities with boundaries and centers, there is little common ground between the use of marginality by Van Gennep (for whom it is a category for distinguishing types of symbols) and Park (who uses it to describe the situation of people with multiple cultural loyalties).

This theoretical diversity in the study of adolescence and marginality has not been obvious in the reading of ancient literature, as classicists have used relatively simple models of adolescent “initiation” that have long been a part of ethnographic lore.² For the most part a small number of landmark studies on the subject of adolescent initiation in ancient Greece have served as models for literary scholarship. In 1939, Henri Jeanmaire published a landmark study comparing Spartan practices and the myths about Theseus to tribal initiations and initiations into secret societies in Africa, then in 1969, Angelo Brelich produced a work that interpreted a number of enigmatic Greek rituals as

examples of van Gennep's *rites de passage*.³ However, the notion that studies of adolescent initiation might be of value for the reading of Greek poetry only became widespread in the wake of a work whose theoretical perspective was more complex, Pierre Vidal-Naquet's essay, "The Black Hunter and the Origin of the Athenian Ephebeia."⁴

Vidal-Naquet combs through a wide range of material, including myth, art and description of ritual, and, under the influence of the structuralist anthropological theory of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Van Gennep's work on *rites de passage*, produces a clearly defined portrait of the Greek adolescent in his passage to adulthood. Defining the mature Greek man in terms of his social roles, as hoplite warrior, citizen, husband and father, Vidal-Naquet claims that adolescence entailed a temporary identity that was the reversal of these roles, so that the adolescent appeared as a hunter in the wild, given to tricks and deception, with an ambiguous sexual identity that ranged from transvestite, to celibate, to hypersexual womanizer. Vidal-Naquet conceives of this reversal in terms of the dialectic that has informed structuralism since the work of Ferdinand de Saussure: the semantic differentiation that makes meaning possible must arise from acts of negation in the material that makes up the sign. That is to say, what makes the letter "t" meaningful in speech or handwriting is that it is *not* a "d" or an "l" or any other letter.⁵ Accordingly, Vidal-Naquet looks for the distinguishing characteristics of the Greek adolescent in those behaviors that contradict what is expected of the adult Greek man.⁶

In the introductory essay to this volume, Fritz Graf has noted how apt Vidal-Naquet's ideas were for the time in which he introduced them; I would add that this particular model was especially attractive to scholars of narrative, whatever their generational and political loyalties.⁷ Jeanmaire and Brelich used material from ethnographic study as hypothetical comparanda that could provide a plausible prehistory for previously obscure rituals and institutions. The meaning drawn from such comparison was a meaning that belonged to that prehistory, since the descriptions of the historical rituals never referred to such a meaning, and sometimes proposed quite different meanings. To repeat this comparison with narratives rather than rituals forces one to take a stand on questions of whom traditional stories have meaning for. If a prehistoric practice is the meaning of a narrative of the fifth century, the notion of storytelling as a historically located act of communication between a storyteller and his audience, a notion basic to literary interpretation, breaks down completely. Accordingly, Jeanmaire's and Brelich's work was initially of greater use to historians of religion seeking to employ traditional narratives as a source than to literary critics looking for a means of understanding the poetic unity of a popular tragedy.

In Vidal-Naquet's work, the semiotic axis on which the transition from adolescence to manhood takes place itself provides a metatext which makes it possible for historically specific practices and narratives to possess meaning.

Whether in an account of a particular ritual, a narrative from poetry or drama, or a narrative history of some institution, the roles of black hunter and hoplite preserve the semantic values that arise from their relationship of contradiction. Indeed, political history itself can be read off of this grid, as when Vidal-Naquet proposes that the unusual educational practices of the Spartans were tools through which they located their society on a timeless mythical plane that would not be disturbed by historical transformation.⁸ This claim for a purely semantic dimension to black hunter imagery suggests that theories of initiation are properly sources of philological knowledge rather than comparanda for the prehistory of Greek religion, and Vidal-Naquet's ideas have been employed by a number of scholars interested in the adolescent adventures of such heroes as Theseus, Jason, Ion, and Hippolytus.⁹

In the wake of Vidal-Naquet's work, scholars began to use a whole range of theories of initiation to make this metatext of adolescence more widely applicable to ancient narrative. In the work of such well-known theorists of initiation as Victor Turner and Mircea Eliade, the temporary separation of the initiand from his community is the necessary condition for reshaping him from a child into a man. Accordingly, a number of literary scholars have concluded that the conjunction of youth, marginality, and a transition in status in narratives reflects the same concern over the question of how a boy becomes a man that Turner and Eliade find in adolescent initiation. Ethnographic material also provides a wealth of other symbolic events and terrains that appear in the various forms that adolescent initiation takes, and classical scholars have drawn on this material as well, treating ordeals¹⁰ and certain locales such as bodies of water¹¹ and forests¹² as definitive symbols marking narratives as accounts of youths being initiated into adult life.

The Black Hunter paradigm in practice

In another essay in this volume, Irene Polinskaya demonstrates that the very fusion of ideology and social reality in the Black Hunter model that makes it appealing actually undermines the value of that model; in this essay I will go further and show that the treatment of ideas in the model implies a rigidity to Greek thought that is unwarranted by the evidence. We can see this most clearly if we consider what aspects of a narrative justify identifying the narrative in some way with the phenomenon of adolescent initiation. Depending on what features have been chosen as evidence of adolescent initiation, this question can be more or less obvious. Some of the aspects of narratives that are linked to initiation are extremely general. For instance, the fact that initiations may involve immersion or time spent in the wild seems insufficient evidence to support a claim that a young man engaged in actions in or near water or in a forest is in some way an initiand. In the case of ordeals and tests, unless we can tie a particular activity to a specific initiation rite, there is no way of distinguishing an ordeal from other types of danger, whether

war, spontaneous heroism, victimization or careless stupidity; which of these it is will make a striking difference in how we understand the narrative.

The case of the black hunter seems less open to this line of criticism in as much as the figure that Vidal-Naquet describes is quite definite and striking. Hunting, use of deception, use of the bow, refusal of normal sexuality, lack of any normal political role in a community; these are features shared by a number of mythical figures such as Paris, Hippolytus and Heracles, who could conceivably be characterized as ephebes, as Greek adolescents. However, before we look to structuralist categories in order to assign every character in Greek myth to an age-class, we should first see what effect applying the category of black hunter to an actual narrative has on our ability to interpret that narrative.

Vidal-Naquet presents us with a useful example of this sort of application with his own attempt to use his theory as literary criticism: Sophocles' *Philoctetes*.¹³ He argues that the tragedy presents an image of the renewal of society through the initiation of young men, by portraying Neoptolemus as a typical initiate in his interactions with Odysseus and Philoctetes. Lemnos serves as a marginal wilderness where the youth undertakes an ordeal, while Odysseus serves as a master of the initiation who directs Neoptolemus in the deceptions that will teach him the meaning of being a warrior. Neoptolemus further marginalizes himself by befriending Philoctetes, who lives utterly outside human society, although this also involves turning away from the war at Troy, a potential failure for this initiation. So at the end, the hero Heracles, presented as a sort of ideal hoplite warrior, arrives on the scene to dissuade them from their plans and assure that the newly-initiated Neoptolemus joins the other adult warriors at Troy. Vidal-Naquet's ideas about Greek adolescence serve as both models for the task that Neoptolemus undertakes, and the reason for his final elevation at the end of the play. The youth is engaged in this strange quest for Philoctetes' bow, and is expected to use deception, because he is a black hunter, and the special status that Heracles prophesies for him results from his success in this ordeal.

This reading of the *Philoctetes* vividly illustrates the problems of using initiation as a means of reading narrative, in that it shows the difficulty of recognizing a particular character and series of events as definitive of an initiation. This problem becomes most apparent if we employ Vidal-Naquet's concept of the black hunter more rigorously than he does himself. If we are seriously looking for a character in the play who obeys authority unquestioningly, pursues a quarry in the wilderness that he intends to master through deception, and seeks military victory through the use of the non-hoplite bow, we must surely turn our attention to Odysseus. If we consider too the other actions of this hero that the fifth-century audience would have remembered from the *Odyssey*, that in addition to marginality, deception, and the use of a bow to kill his enemies, Odysseus is characterized by a recurrent rejection of marriages along with nearly unrestricted sexual activity, we have the most perfect example of the black hunter in Greek mythology. Vidal-

Naquet's portrayal of the black hunter helps us to see more fully the transgressive qualities of Odysseus, but offers no way of understanding why Odysseus is depicted with these qualities. Vidal-Naquet's primary claim, that these characteristics are tied to adolescence, offers no help, as Odysseus is not an adolescent, and these qualities put him in conflict with Neoptolemus, the only adolescent in the play. Vidal-Naquet himself simply ignores the similarity of Odysseus to the black hunter and identifies him instead as a "hypercivilized" politician.¹⁴ Once we lose the educational function that he links to adolescence, Vidal-Naquet offers no clear reason to identify such figures as ephebes.

In general the connection between the black hunter figure and an educational function in ancient Greece seems very arbitrary. We can also see this in the case of actual social institutions in Vidal-Naquet's description of the *krypteia* at Sparta.¹⁵ In this practice, a small number of young men in their twenties spent a year away from their fellows, killing Helots. They went about naked¹⁶ and were to avoid being seen by any other human beings, under penalty of death. This institution thus offers an excellent example of the black hunter, as Vidal-Naquet notes. Accordingly, in answer to the question, "Why did the Spartans have these young men do this?" Vidal-Naquet proposes that they meant to "dramatize the moment when the young elite Spartan leaves his childhood behind him forever."¹⁷ While a certain educational function for the practice is not without some logic (and appears in some of our ancient sources as well),¹⁸ Vidal-Naquet offers a strangely placid description of what must have been one of the most horrifying features of Helot life.¹⁹

There is undoubtedly a link between the age of the participants and the other features of the institution, but it seems grotesque to privilege this link as an "origin" for this institutionalized state terror, implying that the *krypteia* was "really" a form of education rather than a tool for destroying the political will of a large portion of the Spartan population.²⁰ Vidal-Naquet does acknowledge that the primary function of the *krypteia* was to terrorize Helots, defending his initial observation about the meaning of the *krypteia* with a claim that the role of "black hunter" that developed in initiation rites was adapted to the needs of the Spartan state in the eighth century. Yet in doing so, he notes that the *krypteia* preserves in full the transgressive qualities of the black hunter that adolescent transition rites like the *ephêbeia* and the *koureion* only display in a very restricted fashion.²¹ If the demands of state terror preserve an institution for over three centuries, shouldn't such demands be considered sufficient to account for the basic structure of the institution? Certainly they should be considered more significant than a presumed origin in age-class transitions, which by the classical period refer to this structure primarily in aetiologies and etymologies.

The examples of Odysseus and the *krypteia* do support the notion that the Greek imagination was haunted by figures who were the opposite of the citizen-hoplite in that they traveled alone in the wild and hunted animals and men using treachery or a bow and arrows. Yet this figure was not always

an adolescent making a transition from childhood to adulthood, or even an adolescent. I find it simpler to note that in adopting the role of black hunter one distanced oneself from the roles of citizen and hoplite. This distancing could have many meanings, and hence does not necessarily mean that the hunter is in the process of becoming a citizen-hoplite.

Anthropology as a source for “recursive” methods of reading

We have seen that the concept of the black hunter, which is persuasive so long as one uses it merely as a tool for classifying static characters, becomes far less so when one takes into account the actual goals these characters aim at in their actions. This does not in itself demonstrate that anthropological models of adolescent initiation and other rites of passage are of no value, but it does show a need to articulate the differences between anthropological knowledge and our goals in interpreting narrative. Wolfgang Iser has recently examined questions of this type directly, by considering the act of interpretation as a form of translation.²² By making clear how interpretation always involves producing a new set of signs that is in some way treated as the truth of the object being interpreted, Iser focuses attention on the relationship between the two symbolic registers, that of the object itself and that of the interpretation. He distinguishes between a number of different forms of interpretation, the most important for us being those he makes between interpretation performed through a hermeneutic circle and that performed through recursion. The hermeneutic circle treats the object under study as one whose various elements possess some sort of logical relationship to each other which provides the object with its unity and coherence. Thus one can test one’s interpretation of the whole object by seeing whether it also provides acceptable interpretations for the parts, or an interpretation of an author’s psychology by seeing how it corresponds to more general interpretations of the language the author is using. The hermeneutic circle is, of course, the basic interpretive method of literary studies and philology, since these fields take as basic working assumptions that a given text, the whole body of work of an author, and the language the author writes in each possess a positive unity that can be described through acts of interpretation.

Recursion, on the other hand, is a mode of interpretation developed for objects of study where one can distinguish between an input and an output to a system; interpretation through recursion seeks an interpretation such that given any particular input, the output can be predicted. Iser develops his notion of recursion from Clifford Geertz’s concept of thick description of human culture, and such an interpretive practice is particularly well adapted to interpretations of human action. Unlike texts, the actions of a human being or of a community of people do not have a single unified shape *in toto*. We do not understand a person’s actions only at their death, rather, we feel we understand their actions when we can sense a coherent unity between how

they respond to various situations. That is, our interpretation of them accounts for the relationship between the information they take in and the actions they take, between input and output. From this perspective, any description of a person or a community is necessarily incomplete and an approximation, since there is no reason to believe that all significant inputs have been received and hence that one has seen the full range of action of the system. Recursion presumes an unobservable infinitude to the set of data. In contrast, while the hermeneutic circle may admit that the object could become more complete, actually discovering new data that belong to the object is likely to actually contradict a given interpretation. It therefore requires the notion of the lacuna: one seeks to know as well as possible what one knows one does not know, presenting it as a gap in a recognizable unity rather than as a missing boundary to that unity.

Structuralist anthropology has a significant potential for confusing these two modes of interpretation. In developing structural linguistics, Ferdinand de Saussure posited that language consisted of two distinct but related phenomena: *parole*, the actual statements made in a particular language, and *langue*, the structure of the language which accounts for why statements in the language mean what they do. *Langue*, rather than *parole*, is the proper object of the study of language.²³ In one respect this is a completely unproblematic distinction, since for the products of the field of linguistics to be of any use, they need to be more systematic and compressed than the whole collection of things that the members of a linguistic community say. In this sense it is simply an example of interpretation through recursion, as newly studied data in the form of *parole* lead linguists to refine their notions of a *langue* that can accurately account for all the *parole* of that language.

The theoretical difficulty arises when the *langue* that linguists create is treated as the actual knowledge that enables the members of a linguistic community to produce *parole*.²⁴ This is a black-box problem, a question of how well one can know the inner mechanism of an object that is opaque to direct observation solely by analyzing the effects of that mechanism on the outside world.²⁵ This problem becomes far more important when structuralism is used in anthropology. Lévi-Strauss grounds his application of methods from structuralist linguistics to ethnographic data in his notion that cultural formations should possess a structure like that of language because both are products of the human mind.²⁶ With this move, he rejects the possibility of a weak interpretation of what a derived structure describes; the structure derived from the action is explicitly not merely an economical means of describing the actions observed by an ethnologist, it is the actual structure of the minds of the people of the community. This focus on mental structure further implies that accounting for the contents of a person's mind in purely semiotic terms is the best means of interpreting their actions, denying that issues of evaluation and negotiation might be significant elements of human action. From this perspective, function possesses the

meaning it has in Vladimir Propp's morphology of folktales, referring to actions as predicates that mark the relationship between the actors, rather than the purpose in the minds of the actors.

By adopting this perspective and schematizing action to such an extent that reaction and intention become meaningless, Vidal-Naquet assures that any statement he makes about the meaning of the black hunter will bear no relationship to the expressed aims of the black hunters he mentions. Because the demeanor of the black hunter contradicts that of the hoplite-citizen, he is Other; because contradiction can mean negation and negation can mean transition-to, the black hunter can be a pre-hoplite. Then all that is necessary is to offer a few cases in which the black hunter is a young man as exempla of this definition he is proposing.

In this elevation of possibility over purpose we begin to get some insight as to why structuralist interpretation of the action of adolescents would be appealing to classicists. The cultural products of the classical world are finite, in the sense that more may be discovered, but no more will ever be produced. The most straightforward way of interpreting classical culture is therefore with a hermeneutic circle: one uses the material that can be observed to grasp an often imperfect whole, whether a text, the corpus of an author, or a building being excavated. The paradigmatic image for what is not known is the lacuna, the space to be filled by the scholar's creative ingenuity, and the most important guideline for this creative work is that of Sherlock Holmes, that once one has eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, is the truth. Indeed, the philological training of most classical scholars leads them to value more highly the improbable, the *lectio difficilior*. A belief in the intellectual and artistic exceptionalism of the ancients and a legitimate fear that a significant but novel piece of data will be obscured by one's preconceptions encourage a tendency to find ever more baroque orders of meaning in ancient material.

In contrast, the ethnographer has the task of finding the normal, of identifying preconceptions and prejudices that *he* is not familiar with, but which assign values to a much wider variety of activities than a scholar of the past can ever hope to observe. He can hardly expect to anticipate every action of his subject community, and so must seek to acquire a sense of which sorts of actions are the most successful in achieving the already highly coded ambitions of the various actors. Indeed, the ethnographer runs the risk that his own actions may seriously affect the way his subjects arrange their lives. Furthermore, because the living subjects of ethnographic study are often subject to Western political jurisdiction, one of the most controversial issues in anthropology today is the way in which ethnographic texts and anthropological theories have been incorporated into legal discourse as a means of identifying the primitive and aboriginal elements of societies.²⁷ We can contrast this with the recent testimony of Martha Nussbaum and John Finnis in Colorado's judicial conflicts over the "naturalness" of homosexual

intercourse: while Nussbaum and Finnis disagreed profoundly over what “Greek attitudes” toward homosexuality were, neither ever showed any concern that by articulating their views in a legal forum they were in some way de-Hellenizing those future Ancient Greeks who might have different attitudes.²⁸

Having delineated the chasm between traditional methods of studying ancient literature and the increasingly self-reflective approaches of ethnographic research, I should state immediately that I do not feel that this gap precludes the use of anthropological theory in the interpretation of ancient narrative. It does, however, demand that we only turn to narrative once we have found a way to answer the question of how narrative is like the social actions that anthropology thinks about. The most obvious answer to this question is that narrative is like social action in as much as it imitates social action. This is, in a sense, the inverse of Victor Turner’s notion of social action as a sort of drama. Turner finds it illuminating to address the way that social actions can be described as dramas in which the various participants each have roles in a series of events with a very specific order, meaning and climax. The mimetic function of narrative reverses this dramatic function of social action: while individuals can dramatize their concerns to others by modeling their actions on paradigms shared by their community, a narrative can make explicitly universalizing statements by delineating a fictive character in terms of those same shared paradigms.

The use of anthropological theory that addresses the recursive nature of social action actually focuses attention on an aspect of narrative that differentiates it from other forms of communication. Because the recursive modes of interpretation that anthropology aims at have the advantage of describing changes in systems by accounting for responses to situations that arise, they offer possibilities for describing how narrative communicates *time*, and does so by depicting action.²⁹ The notion that understanding human action is fundamental to understanding a narrative is not in any way novel, and is taught as a basic communication skill both in school and informally. What anthropology (and other theories of social action) offer to this elementary way of interpreting narratives are some radically different notions of motivations and values.

We can see the value of such an approach if we turn back to the *Philoctetes* and focus on how the characters transform their relationships toward each other and toward the values they express over the course of the play. Above all, Sophocles presents the scheming of Odysseus and the changing attitudes of Neoptolemus toward honesty and friendship not as the ritual inversion that Vidal-Naquet proposes, but as problematic subjects requiring self-justification and debate. Neoptolemus, and presumably Sophocles, rejects Odysseus and the role of black hunter that Vidal-Naquet declares a necessary stage in order to become a man. While Vidal-Naquet refers to this aspect of the plot, he tries to minimize its significance by saying that Neoptolemus’

failure to obey Odysseus' orders is somehow an indication that his initiation is actually at an end,³⁰ creating the strange image of an initiatory ordeal that the initiand succeeds at by failing. The problem of Neoptolemus' obedience to Odysseus becomes even more obvious and profound when we consider that there is no single act of defiance on the part of Neoptolemus, but a series of actions that undermine Odysseus' plans, some of which are not intentionally acts of disobedience.

Carefully examining the actions and goals of the characters in the play allows us to see the artistry of Sophocles that transcends such a simple pattern. Neoptolemus undertakes Odysseus' plan, and wins over Philoctetes, by promising falsely to take him back to Greece, to keep his bow from falling into the hands of Odysseus and to not leave him behind on Lemnos (219–538). When Philoctetes is unconscious and Neoptolemus has the bow, the youth pities him and does not steal the bow (836–67). When he is taking Philoctetes to his ship, Neoptolemus decides he cannot keep up the deception and tells him they are going to Troy, which results in Philoctetes demanding the return of his bow so he can stay on Lemnos (882–924). Neoptolemus at first decides to take the bow and go to Troy with it (1054–80), but cannot do it, and resists Odysseus in order to do what he believes is right and return the bow (1221–92). He tries again to persuade Philoctetes to come to Troy, but when this fails, he resolves to honor his earlier promise and return Philoctetes to Greece, even though it will mean becoming an enemy of the whole Greek army (1308–1408). At this point Heracles appears and sends them both to Troy (1409–51).

The issues of deception, obedience and honor in the play are knotty, but clearly delineated. Neoptolemus is capable of disobedience if it is honorable, but is so incapable of dishonesty that he ends up fulfilling the “false” promises he made under Odysseus' direction, and truly becomes the friend to Philoctetes he initially claimed to be. While the complex interactions between Neoptolemus, Philoctetes and Odysseus deserve far more analysis than I am giving them here, this cursory examination of Neoptolemus and his actions shows plainly that the Greek army, through its agent Odysseus, cannot simply take control of Neoptolemus to achieve its ends, that the very nature which is needed to overthrow Troy resists such manipulation. The marginal location of the events, and Philoctetes' separation from civilization, seem particularly significant as a setting in which Neoptolemus can challenge the legitimacy of the Greek leadership at the same time as he continues to embrace its cause, by allowing him to see the effects of that leadership's decisions from a critical distance. Sophocles presents a hero with a unique claim to respect and a good reputation, rather than a youth who is shaped to embody the values that predominate on the campaign against Troy.

Contextualizing the ephêbeia

By focusing on the mimetic quality of narrative we can recognize how the poets, by ascribing particular actions and goals to characters, present events as unique as those we have seen in the *Philoctetes*. Rituals and institutions involving adolescents will be useful for such study, not as paradigms in themselves, but as statements made in the same language of beliefs and ideology as the narratives, declarations made by whole cities rather than by an individual poet. But other institutions may be of equal value for making sense of the narratives, since there is no *a priori* reason why attitudes that connect marginality and status in the stories of young men need be unrelated to the attitudes embodied in other institutions involving marginality and status transition. Instead, in those myths in which a young man appears to undergo some rite of passage, it may well be more useful to work from a paradox that led Van Gennep to formulate his theory of *rites de passage*, namely that achieving a new status *inside* a community may require that a number of events take place *outside* it.

This pattern relies on an opposition between inside and outside that serves as a useful point of contact between narrative and a variety of theories of social action. The metaphorical application of this spatial opposition to social situations is a common human practice: people frequently use various criteria to determine whether some person or object is more inside or outside their society relative to other people or objects. As a result, concepts derived from this opposition, such as “the center” and “the periphery” of a society, as well as “marginality,” are important in a number of theories of cultural anthropology, sociology, and the history of religion.³¹ By addressing the location of characters and events in terms of whether they are inside or outside their communities, it becomes possible to adapt the full range of these theories to interpretation of poetic narrative. This focus on location in relation to various communities has the further advantage of creating more points of contact between narratives and the cultural world that gave them their significance, since the relationship between interior and exterior of communities is important in a wide range of Greek institutions, from athletics to the relationship between the sexes. As we consider a range of social institutions, we can see how poets constructed plots that described unique events but appealed to the common experience of the audience. By drawing on a variety of paradigms for their heroes’ situations, the poets produced narratives that are, in a sense, initiations of the protagonist, but not so much into adulthood in general as into the future they will enjoy as heroes and great kings.

Only as we examine such narratives individually will we have an adequate opportunity to observe how stories of young men express concerns tied uniquely to their youth, since we will be able to recognize recurring patterns that differ from the more general issues involved in obtaining status, without having to rely too heavily on our obscured knowledge of Greek adolescence.

In the research I have so far been able to carry out along these lines I have already found one unanticipated, but not improbable, similarity between stories of this type. Many of these narratives share an interest in heredity and the problems a family faces as a father tries to hand down his place in society to his son, in particular in the possibility that such a transfer can be unjustly interrupted.³² This is in fact a concern that was recognizably addressed in real adolescent transitions (most notably the *koureion* rite in the phratries of Attica), but it has not been foregrounded because of our limited information about such rites. This outcome suggests that it is not the categories of adolescence and marginality, or even the insights of those who have combined them into “initiation” that are the greatest barrier to the mutual interpretation of ritual and narrative, but a tendency to see these categories as recipes instead of classification tools. A useful analogy may be the distinction between mode and theme in music: adolescence and marginality, as conceptual categories used by nearly all human beings, lay out “notes” that are available to everyone, but the “themes” that individuals express through them are both infinite in variety and shared among the members of specific communities. The social sciences can offer us a sense of the resources ancients (and moderns) used to express their concerns, but our greatest satisfactions as scholars are likely to come as we grasp the various specific statements that poets, artists, communities, and individuals communicated by means of these resources.

Notes

- 1 For instance, Simon Goldhill, in Easterling, ed. (1997) 335, declares that such models show how “tragedy manipulates and explores ritual patterns to express a sense of order and disorder in the world.”
- 2 See the beginning of Graf’s essay in this volume, for a short account of how the Latin *initiatio* came to be used for rituals involving adolescents.
- 3 Jeanmaire (1939); Brelich (1969).
- 4 First published as Vidal-Naquet (1968) and then revised for inclusion in Vidal-Naquet (1981) 151–75. References to this essay will be to Vidal-Naquet (1986a) 106–28, the English translation of Vidal-Naquet (1981) 151–75.
- 5 Saussure (1972) 117–18.
- 6 Since it is not necessary for my argument, I have not evaluated the validity of the “black hunter” model itself, however, Benedetto (1978) 202–7 and Leitaio (1993) 23–8, have raised serious questions about Vidal-Naquet’s methods and conclusions. The essence of these criticisms is summed up well in a remark of Benedetto’s: after presenting an observation of Brelich’s on the difficulty of discovering the origins of the Athenian institution of the *ephebia* he notes, “Una cautele critica di questo genere è totalmente estranea al modo di lavorare del Vidal-Naquet, che invece procede a passi di gigante” (203). Those who wish to travel as far as possible in their readings of Greek poetry will find Vidal-Naquet’s conclusions exhilarating, but those who hope to remain in Greece may prefer another mode of transportation.
- 7 Graf in this volume.

- 8 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 147–51.
- 9 Theseus in Bacchylides 18: Ieranò (1987) 91–2; Jason in Pindar's *Pythian* 4: Segal (1986) 57–9; Ion in Euripides' *Ion*: Goff (1988) 45–7; Hippolytus in Euripides' *Hippolytus*: Goff (1990) 4 and Goldhill (1986) 120.
- 10 Burnett (1970) 6; Hubbard (1987) 5; Carnes (1996) 25.
- 11 Segal (1979) 34; Ieranò (1989) 168–9; Burnett (1985) 29–31; Krummen (1990) 201.
- 12 Segal (1979) 137–8.
- 13 Vidal-Naquet (1988), a translation of Vidal-Naquet (1971).
- 14 Vidal-Naquet (1988) 171–2.
- 15 This institution is described in Plato *Laws* 633b–c, the scholia to this passage, Plutarch *Lycurgus* 28.1–3, and Heraclides Ponticus *FHG* 2 p. 210.
- 16 There is disagreement in our sources about what this nakedness entailed: Plato *Laws* 633c mentions going barefoot and sleeping without bedding; the scholia to Plato *Laws* 633b says they were naked and traveled without servants or provisions, living by theft; Plutarch *Lycurgus* 28.2 has them provided only with daggers and minimal provisions; and Heraclides Ponticus *FHG* 2 p. 210 describes them as fully armed. Lévy (1988) 251–2, suggests that this might reflect two stages in the career of the *kryptos*, a period of testing in the wilderness followed by service as “des sortes de commandos, utilisés aussi bien pour terroriser les hilotes et éliminer certains que pour des missions de reconnaissance à la guerre.” Such a solution, however, ignores how Plutarch's account involves both a form of nakedness and violence against helots. Given the emphasis on secrecy in this institution, we should perhaps be content with a certain amount of ambiguity in our sources.
- 17 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 113–14.
- 18 Plato *Laws* 633b–c, and the scholiast on this passage. It is worth mentioning that Plato put this description of the *krypteia* in the mouth of the Spartan Megillus.
- 19 Plutarch (*Lycurgus* 28.3) supports his description of the murder of helots in the *krypteia* with Thucydides' account (4.80) of how the Spartans once determined who the 2000 most spirited helots were, and had them killed in such a way that “no one knew how each one was killed.”
- 20 The task of persuading the world of classical scholarship that the *krypteia* ought to be read as a mechanism of state terror rather than as an initiation has recently become easier with the publication of Paul Cartledge (2001). His essay “A Spartan Education” brings his extensive learning to bear on this issue, especially on page 88, and more or less proves what I had managed to intuit from my more limited reading.
- 21 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 147–8.
- 22 Iser (2000).
- 23 Saussure (1972) 8–15.
- 24 Saussure has no real interest in this point, apparently because he is so content with the theoretical power he has gained in distinguishing *langue* and *parole*. To be fair to his achievement, however, I should note that he does understand the phenomenon of language as something that is social and pragmatic, he merely has no interest in studying these dimensions of language. Specifically, his references to the process of training in language that a child undergoes (1972: 14) and to an undefined “collective consciousness” (1972: 98) ought to be of some comfort to those friends of structuralism and semiotics who see these practices as a necessary prelude to intelligent discussion of the political dimensions of language and other sign-systems.

- 25 For a highly skeptical account of black-box approaches to the functioning of the human mind, see Searle (1984).
- 26 Lévi-Strauss (1963) 71.
- 27 For example, see Povinelli (1998) and the response to it by Frow and Morris (1999).
- 28 Both published articles defending the views they expressed in their testimony: Nussbaum (1994) and Finnis (1995).
- 29 Ricoeur (1984) 52–87.
- 30 Vidal-Naquet (1988) 172.
- 31 For the purposes of my own work I have found most useful Edward Shils' notion of central values in relation to the center and peripheries of societies (1961, 1965), Victor Turner's idea of the liminal (1967, 1969), Mary Douglas's discussion of the role of the marginal in concepts of pollution (1970: 137–53), and Clifford Geertz's conception of royal courts as ideological centers for Javanese culture (1983: 122–3).
- 32 Dodd (1999).

LIMINALITY AS METAPHOR

Initiation and the frontiers of ancient Athens

Irene Polinskaya

In “The Black Hunter and the Origin of the Athenian *Ephebeia*” Vidal-Naquet suggests that the Athenian institution of the *ephebeia* originated as a rite of passage.¹ He demonstrates how various elements of the social practice and the Athenian imaginary (*l’imaginaire*)² associated with the *ephebeia* only become comprehensible when placed within the framework of the initiation paradigm. Vidal-Naquet uses two heuristic techniques to help build his interpretive model: a structuralist theoretical approach and a social historical methodology. The former offers him a universally applicable repertoire of established binary relationships: nature vs. culture, center vs. periphery, city vs. countryside, adult vs. adolescent, etc. The latter allows him to access the meaning of cultural phenomena by studying together social practice and “the imaginary” in their historical context.³ Vidal-Naquet seeks to reconcile (in his own words, “to bridge the gap between”) the myths, rituals, and social circumstances associated with the *ephebeia*, which appear rather foreign to each other when viewed independently.⁴ Mapped onto the initiation paradigm,⁵ however, they reveal a common meaning.

Vidal-Naquet insisted on an ontological relationship between the model and the historical institution. He placed initiation (an interpretive model) on the same chronological plane with the social reality, postulating the existence of some earlier historical form of the *ephebeia* as a rite of passage prior (and as a predecessor) to the military *ephebeia* of the fourth century BCE.⁶ In fact, his application of the initiation model in this case constitutes the enactment of a metaphorical process.⁷ The connection between models and metaphors has been recognized for some time now in the social sciences.⁸ I argue that Vidal-Naquet’s interpretation of the Athenian *ephebeia* is best understood as a metaphoric model where the ephebes *are like* tricksters (Melanthus), and *like* solitary hunters (Melanion); the Athenian frontiers *are like* liminal spaces, and the *ephebeia is like*, although not *is* a rite of passage.

In this essay I will not, however, focus on the interpretive model as a whole, but on one of its crucial elements – the view of frontiers as spaces of liminality. My purpose is twofold. First, I wish to show how the structuralist view of the frontier (as the opposite of the center, i.e. civilization and social norms) allows Vidal-Naquet to construct his model of the *ephebeia*, and conversely, how the metaphorical nature of this interpretive process has powerfully imposed the traditional characteristics of liminality onto our understanding of Athenian frontiers in the historical period. With encouragement from Vidal-Naquet, many scholars have taken the metaphor of initiation literally and have come to imagine the Athenian frontiers as wild, desolate areas void of social order or established norms. Indeed, the view of frontiers as liminal spaces strongly prevails in contemporary scholarship on ancient Greek history and religion.⁹ This is especially true in the widely influential work of F. de Polignac,¹⁰ where the polar opposition between the urban and extra-urban sanctuaries is closely linked with the initiation paradigm: the extra-urban sanctuaries inevitably fall into the category of borderline sanctuaries, and the processions that connect these sanctuaries with the city center easily acquire initiatory characteristics.¹¹

The literal understanding of Vidal-Naquet's model is in fact entirely contradicted – as I shall show – by our historical evidence for the frontiers of Athens. My second goal therefore is to push the source and the target domains¹² of his metaphor apart, to re-inscribe the distance between the historical Athenian frontier and the concept of liminal space through the examination of topographic, epigraphic and archaeological evidence. The outcome, I hope, will benefit our understanding of the Athenian frontiers and at the same time give credit to the power of Vidal-Naquet's interpretation. Moreover, if we prevent the frame and the focus of metaphor from collapsing into one another and if we maintain the proper distance between them, we also, figuratively speaking, leave ample room for new connections to be established, and for new metaphors and models to emerge. In the final part of this chapter, I offer a glimpse of alternative views of the Athenian frontier areas, and I demonstrate the unreliability of spatial signals of liminality in comparison with other signals, especially social roles, in the identification of the liminal status of individuals.

The frontier as a sign of liminality of the Athenian *ephebeia*

I begin by showing how the frontier as a liminal space is essential to the construction of Vidal-Naquet's model of the *ephebeia*, and how it occupies a central place in all five of the main arguments in his essay. Significantly, he begins with the suggestion that ephebes are liminal characters, because they undergo a rite of passage that is clearly marked topographically by their position in forts on the frontiers of Athens: "as young soldiers, they occupy the frontier zone of the city, which is expressed physically in the ring of fortlets . . .".¹³ Thus, from the very beginning Vidal-Naquet's model emphasizes the fact that the

ephebes are stationed on the frontiers. His second argument concerns the aetiological legend that explains the origin of the Apatouria, a festival relevant to the ephebes as an age group.¹⁴ On the third day of this festival at a ritual called the *koureion*, young boys cut their hair and sacrificed it to various divinities. Their age at this ceremony is thought to be sixteen.¹⁵ At this festival young boys would also be registered in their phratries ("clans"), thus fulfilling a requirement for citizenship (Scholia to Ar. *Ach.* 146). Two years later ephebes would also undergo scrutiny for membership in their deme ("county" or "township") and then would be enrolled in the *ephebeia* in the civic sense, that is, in the two-year military training and garrison service (Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 42). The story associated with the Apatouria describes a border conflict between Athens and Boeotia, which was resolved by a duel between two warriors, the Boeotian king Xanthus ("the Fair One") and an Athenian substitute for the king, Melanthus ("the Black One"). Melanthus won the duel by using a trick (*apatê*) and therefore the festival is called the Apatouria.¹⁶ So one version of the story goes. An ancient scholiast gives an alternative etymology (ad Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 146): *apatouria* means *homopatoria*, "of the same father," i.e., "of those descended from the same ancestor." The Apatouria is indeed the festival of the clans (phratries).

Vidal-Naquet notes that the story of this successful act of deception might be a problematic model for young ephebes, who as future hoplites should be learning how to win by honest fighting, not by playing tricks. This is where he introduces his "law of symmetrical inversion" as the working principle of initiation, a law that fits most neatly with the structuralist approach. The story of a trick is appropriate for the young ephebes-to-be because, being in a liminal status, they experience the reverse of what they would be expected to do thereafter. Again I stress that this second part of Vidal-Naquet's argument hinges on a topographic detail of the story, namely that the conflict between Xanthus and Melanthus takes place in the frontier area:

The scene is the frontier between Athens and Boeotia: an *eschatia*, a mountainous area that is the "end" of a city's territory, and whose inhabitants are always at loggerheads with their neighbors over the border. Such places existed on the borders of all Greek states. They were the terrain of hunters and shepherds, frontier zones constantly in dispute. And they were necessary to Greek cities if only for training the young soldiers for war.¹⁷

The third argument in his essay concerns the analogy between the Athenian *ephebeia* and the Spartan *krypteia*, which is generally understood to be a rite of passage. To find parallels between the two institutions is to assert that the Athenian *ephebeia* was also a rite of passage. Thus it is crucial that Vidal-Naquet shows how the "law of symmetrical inversion" is at work in both. Column 3 of Table 5.1 shows various sets of oppositions that characterize *kryptoi* (the Spartan equivalent of the ephebes) in contrast to the adult warriors (hoplites). Here, too,

Table 5.1 Blocks of argument in P. Vidal-Naquet “The Black Hunter and the Origin of the Athenian *Ephēbeia*”

<i>Topography</i>	<i>Social reality</i>	<i>Krypteia</i>	<i>Oscophoria</i>	<i>Hunt</i>
borderline forts countryside patrol frontiers	military service admission to phratry Apatouria ritual <i>koureion</i> myth of the Apatouria frontier	preparation for military service hoplite armed phalanx open plain summer trustworthy day syssition city	initiation youth <i>gymnos</i> alone mountains winter cunning night alone frontiers	Phaleron Skiras = frontiers mountains agroï frontiers

their respective spatial locales are significant. The *kryptoi* are out “in the areas that became, in a sense, the frontiers of enemy territories . . . In contrast, the full hoplites were obliged to remain, in peacetime, close . . . to Sparta itself.”¹⁸

His fourth argument concerns the festival of the Oschophoria, which included a procession of boys – two of them dressed as girls – from Athens to the coastal sanctuary of Athena Skiras at Phaleron (Plutarch, *Theseus* 23). The Oschophoria also included a foot race, a competition between the ephebes carrying *oschoi* (vine branches with grapes). Among other elements, Vidal-Naquet once again takes as evidence for the initiatory nature of the festival and of the deity, the topographical position of the seaside sanctuary, to which he adds the evidence of etymology: “the word *skiron* means “lime” and so “badlands” . . . and the names Skiras, Skiros, and Skiron were generally given to outlying districts that either were or had been at some time in the past frontier areas.”¹⁹

The final part of the essay addresses the hunt and here, too, the spatial component of the argument comes to the fore: “Pierre Chantraine has noted that hunting is linked fundamentally with the *agros* in Greece, the land that lies beyond the cultivated area, that is, with the *eschatiai*, the borderlands of Greek cities. . . . In a sense, hunting is firmly on the side of the wild, the ‘raw’, of night, and the skills employed in the Spartan *krypteia* were those of hunting.”²⁰ Vidal-Naquet draws a strong distinction between hunting with a spear by day (appropriate for hoplites), and hunting by night with nets (appropriate for ephebes). In this part of the essay Vidal-Naquet also introduces the myth of Melanion, “the Black Hunter”, who “was so appalled at the prospect of women, he flew to the mountains rather than marry, and he hunted hares, and he set his snares with his dog there, and never came back for anyone” (Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 781–96, trans. Dickinson). Melanion in his guise of “the gloomy solitary hunter who is either a misogynist or who tries to insult Artemis, and who, in any case, flouts the social rules,” is identified by Vidal-Naquet as a prototypical ephebe.²¹

I will not respond in detail to each of the five arguments; rather I will make a combined response to Vidal-Naquet’s use throughout the essay of the concept of “frontier”, which he characterizes as: the “ends” of the city’s territory (*eschatiai*), “badlands” (*skiron*), “the wild places”, *agrois* (field, land, country), and the mountains. The ephebe is defined in reference to all of these characteristics as a “creature of the frontier area, of the *eschatia*.”²²

The five central arguments of the essay share the common topographic reference to frontiers, but this is not the only strand that ties them together. There are other hermeneutic threads (the structuralist approach and the social historical methodology, as I noted above) that serve this same purpose, and the view of frontiers as liminal spaces derives its influence from the rhetorical power of the model as a whole. It is therefore necessary to look into the mechanics of Vidal-Naquet’s model to see how the disparate pieces are made to reinforce each other, and how in the process the Attic frontier becomes a liminal space.

The structuralist approach supplies for this purpose some helpful, prefigured notions, especially the opposition of center to periphery, with the center itself associated with civilization and culture. Thus, the periphery must be identified with the opposite: wilderness and nature. In Vidal-Naquet's model of the *ephebeia*, the frontier repeatedly stands for wilderness, lack of civilization, and liminal experiences. Initiation from the structuralist point of view plays out the opposition between culture and nature, between an adult who is fully cultured and a youth who is still in the realm of nature, by removing the adults-to-be from the center to the periphery before they can be fully (re)admitted in the center.

Originally, in the formulation developed by Van Gennep, the threshold (*limen*), was not indiscriminately identified as a spatial sign of a rite of passage, but was rather used as a metaphor to describe various types of transitions between social statuses, periods of time, and, sometimes, spatial domains.²³ Van Gennep's formula was notably tripartite, but a structuralist views any cultural paradigm through the lens of binary logic. The initiation formula (pre-liminal → liminal → post-liminal rites) thus turns into a set of two binary oppositions in the eyes of a structuralist: pre-liminal vs. liminal and liminal vs. post-liminal. What becomes emphasized is the opposition between the pre-liminal and post-liminal stages vis-à-vis the liminal stage. It is this liminal stage of the rites of passage that has proven most popular in the anthropological studies. Under the influence of the symbolic approach²⁴ the term "liminal" (also "marginal") has acquired "a much wider application,"²⁵ and comes to be associated firmly with the notion of the "non-standard" and the "unusual", descriptive of both individuals, times, places, social status, and social behavior. This wider application must, however, be distinguished from the original use of the term, which was solely concerned with specific types of ritual, the rites of passage. The wider application has been, however, quite popular in describing narratives, modes of behavior, social institutions, and the like. We may call the original use of the paradigm its primary use, and the "wider application" its secondary use. This secondary use is, in fact, nothing more than a metaphorical application of the original paradigm.²⁶ Accordingly, any use of the initiation paradigm that does not directly apply to rituals is metaphorical. Thus, Vidal-Naquet's enterprise of bridging the gap between myth and social practice is best understood as a metaphorical procedure and it is important for a number of reasons to recognize that we are dealing with the metaphorical, secondary application of the initiation paradigm in Vidal-Naquet's treatment of the *ephebeia*. First, viewing Vidal-Naquet's interpretation as an enactment of a metaphorical process allows us to see both the legitimacy and the inherent value of his undertaking: the heuristic power of metaphor consists in its ability to produce new meanings and, therefore, new understandings of reality.²⁷ The application of the initiation paradigm has indeed allowed us to view the Athenian *ephebeia* in a new light. Second, the view of Vidal-Naquet's model as a metaphor explains

the persuasive rhetorical power of his interpretation. It also explains why it is so difficult to critique his model: it is absurd to argue with a metaphor. At the same time, if we recognize the metaphor at work in Vidal-Naquet's model, we can more easily see the problematic consequences of the metaphor gone unnoticed, namely, of the literal readings of Vidal-Naquet's essay.

Initiation as metaphor

It is necessary here to reiterate that a metaphor works by "bringing two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other." Through this detour of *heuristic fiction*, we perceive new connections in things. The rationale for this is the presumed isomorphism which grounds the "analogical transfer of a vocabulary" and which allows a metaphor, like a theoretical model, to "reveal new relations."²⁸ For Vidal-Naquet's interpretation of the *ephebeia* to hold it is necessary that the various types of evidence (myths, rituals, and the features of social practice related to the *ephebeia*) be used as the source domains of the metaphor and to point to a common target domain (initiation). To accomplish this goal, Vidal-Naquet looks for the signals of liminality in each set of evidence. In the end, the two ontological planes, the social reality and the imaginary, usually presenting distinctly different pictures of the phenomena in question²⁹ appear to be identical in the model of the *ephebeia* as an initiation, one serving as a metaphor of the other.

Let us trace the workings of the metaphorical process by means of which the myths and the social reality of the *ephebeia* come to fit together as the pieces of the initiation puzzle (see Table 5.2). Two circumstances of the social reality of the *ephebeia* are central to Vidal-Naquet's discussion: the service on the Athenian frontiers and the ritual of the *koureion* that was part of the Apatouria festival. The Athenian imaginary is represented by two myths: the foundation legend for the Apatouria festival (concerning Melanthus) and the myth of the Black Hunter, Melanion.

The *koureion* was a coming-of-age ritual that involved the cutting and dedication of the adolescent's long hair to the gods.³⁰ It took place in the phratry ("clan") centers throughout Attica, which were not necessarily on the frontiers. The *koureion*, therefore, had nothing to do with the *ephebeia* of military service, and it had everything to do with the *ephebeia* as an age-group.³¹ The charter myth for the Apatouria festival, in contrast to the *koureion* ritual, did not involve ephebes in any sense of the word: the age of Melanthus is not stated (e.g., scholia to Plato *Symp.* 208D). The mythic battle does, however, occur on the frontier. In short: the ritual pertains to the sixteen-year old ephebes, while the legend of the trick pertains to the frontier area. Thus, the connection between the myth and the ritual of the Apatouria is not obvious, while the ritual and the ephebic service at least seem to connect through the age of the participants.³²

Table 5.2 Athenian *ephebeia*: social reality and the imaginary

Social reality		The imaginary	
military training military service	ritual of the <i>koureion</i> at the Apatouria festival	myth of the Apatouria	myth of the Black Hunter
frontiers of Athens	phratry centers – throughout Attica	frontier	mountains
civic <i>ephebeia</i> (18–20 years old)	age <i>ephebeia</i> (16± years old)	no ephebes (?) (age unknown)	ephebe (<i>neaniskos</i>)

The only secure link between the charter myth of the Apatouria and ephebic military service is the fact that both take place on the frontiers. This circumstance is in itself insufficient to explain the relevance of the myth of the Apatouria to the young soldiers in training, unless we assume with Vidal-Naquet that in both cases, in the myth and in practice, frontier is not a neutral place, but a socially marked place, a locus of liminality. If we introduce this preconceived notion, then the liminal character of the locality would define the actors and the actions that take place on the frontiers as liminal. Thus, Vidal-Naquet achieves the connection between the myth of the Apatouria and Athenian ephebic service through the use of the structuralist view of frontiers.

Another step in bridging the gap between the myth and social practice is the connecting of the Melanion story with the *ephebeia*. This also depends on the structuralist view of frontiers as liminal spaces. This myth associates a lonely hunter, Melanion, and his liminal behavior (the refusal to marry and the occupation as a hunter) with wilderness represented by mountains. Again Vidal-Naquet does not connect Melanion in the mountains directly with the ephebes on duty in the forts, but through a third element: he independently identifies the mountains in the myth and the frontiers of the ephebic service as loci of liminality. In both cases young men find themselves in liminal spaces, and by virtue of this connection, the group military service on the frontiers becomes analogous to solitary hunting, and the ephebes become “the heirs of the Black Hunter.”

By this process of structural substitutions (in effect, metaphorical transfers of meaning), the frontier of myth and the real Athenian frontier become identical in Vidal-Naquet’s model (the frontier of myth becomes a metaphor of the real frontier) and both are viewed as the loci of liminality. Thus, the social reality and the imaginary together provide for Vidal-Naquet all the necessary pieces to complete the puzzle. The rhetorical force of the overall

model in turn validates and solidifies the conflation of the mythical image of the Athenian frontiers as loci of liminality with the image of real frontiers. The boundary between the historical reality and the imaginary collapses, and the metaphorical sense replaces the primary.

When the distance between the primary and the secondary subjects of a metaphor disappears, the metaphor dies, or else becomes a myth.³³ I would argue that the success of Vidal-Naquet's treatment of the *ephebeia* had a double effect: it not only has produced a new understanding of the social practice, but it has also motivated other scholars to employ the metaphor of liminality, without realizing that it is, in fact, merely a metaphor.³⁴ In the case of dead linguistic metaphors, the metaphorical sense eventually becomes part of the word's polysemy, that is, the metaphorical meaning becomes the literal one. But in the case of cultural metaphors, when a metaphor is taken literally, a serious distortion of the source domain is the result. If Vidal-Naquet's model of the Athenian *ephebeia* is taken literally, then the Athenian frontiers *are* (rather than *are like*) the spaces of liminality, wild, desolate, void of civilization, the opposite of culture and norm. The latter is simply not the case, yet the evidence for the literal readings of Vidal-Naquet is plenty.³⁵ While one cannot argue with the use of a striking metaphor, one may free oneself from its spell and contemplate the possibility of other metaphors and other interpretations by emphasizing the distance between the original vehicle and the tenor of the metaphor. My hope is to re-establish a clear distinction between the Athenian frontiers and liminal spaces.

The social topography of Athenian frontiers

I now turn to the project of re-inscribing the distance between the historical Athenian frontiers and the spaces of liminality by examining the archaeological and topographic evidence for the social life of the Athenian frontiers and the historical *ephebeia* of the fourth century BCE. Since Attica is surrounded by water on the East, South, and West, her only land frontiers lie to the West and North-West, along its borders with Megara and Boeotia respectively. In the fourth century and later, military forts are found both on the coast (Rhamnous, Sounion, etc.) and along the land frontier. We should imagine ephebes stationed in all of them. In the eyes of some historians a coastline is a type of frontier. Does it mean that a coastline is therefore a liminal territory in the structuralist sense? In practice it might be in some places, but in others it is the center of civilized life for a bustling local community. In most cases these coastal settlements are near a harbor, which is necessarily an area of social contact, often energized by trade and characterized by dense habitation. Some archaeologists have even argued that such coastal settlements as Rhamnous and Sounion can legitimately be called "urban" settlements.³⁶ The coastal forts where some Athenian ephebes were stationed were in most cases sites of major settlements; therefore, the forts were not located in wild, deserted

areas, but very much in the center of community life of a particular coastal deme. It does not seem possible to identify Rhamnous – perhaps one of the earliest fort-sites in Attica – and the very large settlement area around it³⁷ as a “wild frontier”, or to call the ephebes garrisoned there a “marginalized group”. Rather than being isolated, the garrison of the fort was very much involved in the local social life, as our fragmentary epigraphic evidence suggests.³⁸ The same can be said about the forts at Eleusis,³⁹ also dating to the sixth century BCE, and at Sounion.⁴⁰

As far as the land frontier is concerned, the forts of the north-western frontier seem to the casual observer to be located in the wild and desolate places, and indeed they are situated in a more mountainous area than the rest of Attica. Mountains, however, are found in other parts of Attica, as well. There is the ridge of Hymettos, and other mountains, Parnes, Aigaleos, Pentelikon, and coastal heights that all make for a rather hilly landscape which is typical of so many areas of Greece (see Fig. 5.1). In other words, mountains are not identical to frontiers, although each in their own particular circumstance can be identified as liminal. The Attic forts were, moreover, not primarily associated with mountains, but rather with the borders of Attica. The placement on the borders does not, however, mean a break with civilization. In fact, in *The Defense of Attica*, Mark Munn convincingly shows that a major criterion for a fort-site was:

inhabitability, as determined chiefly by the availability of water. A location that met these criteria was often attractive for civilian habitation as well, and so garrison forts were frequently situated on or immediately adjacent to civilian settlements (as at Eleusis, Rhamnous, Aphidna, Oinoe and Eleutherai).⁴¹

The position of forts on the state borders did not in practice, therefore, entail social isolation for ephebes, and thus any characteristics of liminality apply to the border forts only metaphorically, not literally.

Consideration of the patterns of settlement in Attica may help further disassociate the Athenian frontiers from such images of isolation. It is widely accepted that the connection between the countryside (*chora*) and the town (*astu*) was qualitatively different in ancient Greece than it is between the modern city and countryside.⁴² There is a long history of opinions on the patterns of habitation in Attica, but it is safe to say that roughly half of the population lived outside of the city of Athens.⁴³ It seems right to envision with Robin Osborne a range of possibilities from nucleated village-type settlements in some parts (Vari-Vouliagmeni), to a prevalence of dispersed farms in other areas (Sounion), depending on a combination of local ecological and social factors.⁴⁴ The patterns of land-holding suggest that the interests of one land-owner could be directed to a good number of land-plots in various parts of Attica, including the borderlands.⁴⁵

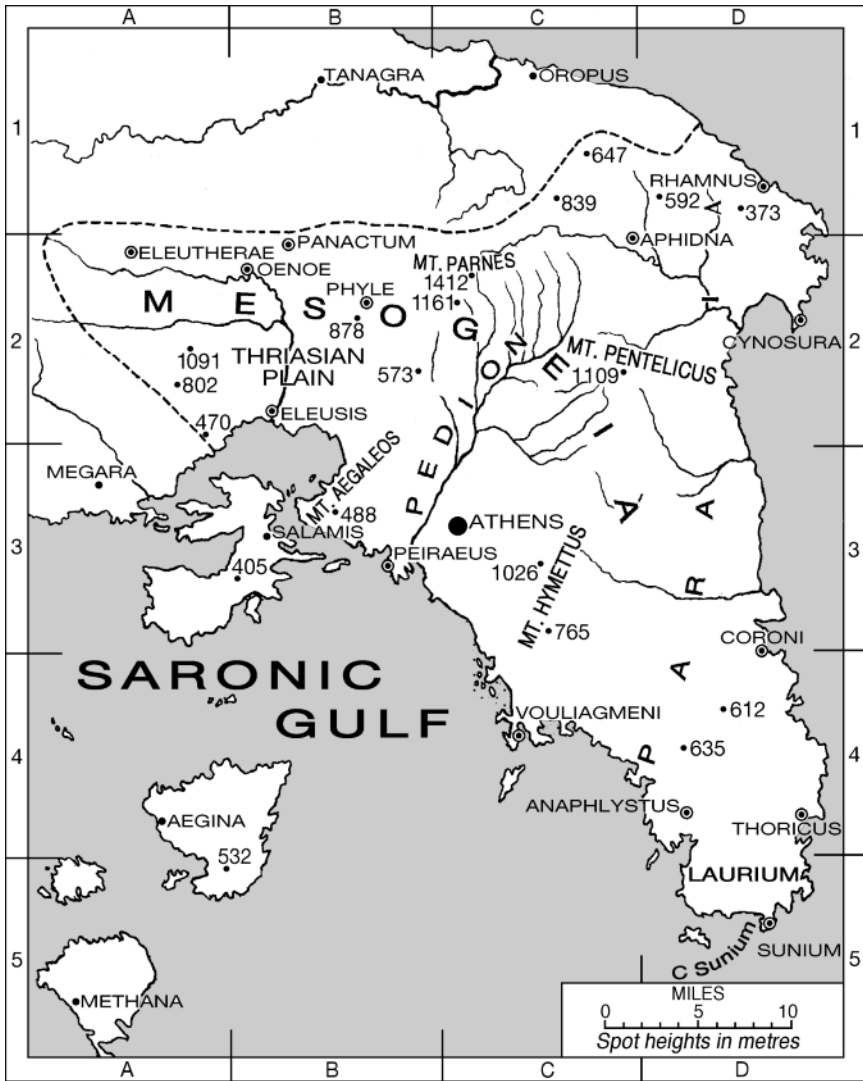


Figure 5.1 Map showing the Classical and Hellenistic Forts of Attica

The interdependence of city and countryside, even the dominance of the countryside are important clues to our understanding of the role of forts in classical Attica. There are two perspectives on this issue. The first, which is more traditional and prevalent – and lately articulated by Josiah Ober⁴⁶ – is that “in the fourth century the border forts of Attica were employed, for the first time, as elements in a system of preclusive frontier defense based on the control of all major routes into Attica.”⁴⁷ Mark Munn outlined a different view of the function of forts:⁴⁸

Although the urban center, ultimately, was the proper refuge for the population of Attica, garrison forts were essential for the protection of both property and populace in outlying areas. Hence their locations were dictated primarily by the presence of both sizable communities and significant economic resources. So, in addition to the agricultural resources local to Eleusis, Oinoe, Aphidna, and Rhamnous, the agricultural and pastoral resources of Parnes and the Skourta plain were protected by Phyle and Panacton, and the capital resources in the mining district, as discussed by Xenophon, were secured by the forts there . . . The social and political importance . . . of protecting the property of individual citizens . . . was the overriding criterion for the establishment especially of inland forts. In the face of the main force of the enemy in the wartime, the safety provided by garrison forts consisted in their security as points of refuge. They were, in effect, independent nodes of local security, not links in the chain of regional defense.

In my view, the two suggested functions of forts are not mutually exclusive. The picture drawn by Mark Munn has an additional benefit of offering an insight into the relationship between the presence of forts and the presence of civilian communities in the frontier areas, the relationship that finds support in the textual and epigraphic evidence.⁴⁹

Let us tie Munn's view of the forts into our inquiry about the character of frontier areas: "Garrisons and patrols routinely provided a local armed presence to protect the citizenry against animal theft or other forms of raiding or brigandage that might be attempted at any time in remote areas."⁵⁰ If indeed the ties between the garrison of the forts, ephebes among them, and the local communities were of such a close nature, then the characterization of these ephebes as marginal becomes questionable, and the opposition between the ephebes in a fort and the civilized life within the local community is hardly possible. Or to put it the other way round: under the socio-geographical conditions of life on the Athenian frontiers, the ephebes could not have been entirely isolated from the rest of the community. Even though they were stationed away from Athens, the symbolic center of the state, their situation differed little from the other inhabitants of borderline areas and they were not necessarily deprived of or opposed to civilization or social regulation.

Greek terminology: the meanings of *eschatia*

We gain further insights into the non-oppositional relationship between center and periphery in the social topography of Athens when we consider the term *eschatia*. Literary authors like Herodotus use the term to describe the borderlands of a state. However, *eschatia*, which primarily means 'the furthest part,' is a relative term when applied to physical landscape. It

certainly can mean “a border,” “an edge,” but Vidal-Naquet locates *eschatia* specifically in “a mountainous area that is the “end” of a city’s territory.”⁵¹ Such an understanding of the term is in sharp contrast with the epigraphic evidence from Attica. In the *rationes centesimarum*, inscriptions recording sales of public land in Attica and dating to the fourth century BCE, the word *eschatia* refers to a specific type of land, “typically in the neighborhood of hills.”⁵² In Attic epigraphic documents, as M.H. Jameson has pointed out to me, *eschatia* usually refers to a type of real property, not to the relationship of a property’s location vis-à-vis the center but perhaps to sloping land at the limits of the prime, level farmland. These important observations are directly relevant to our discussion of frontiers. First, the word *eschatia* does not always refer to and therefore should not be indiscriminately used to describe the state borders of Attica. This land is not located on the borders of the state, as the *rationes* show, but throughout the peninsula (in at least seven different Attic demes). It is the land not on the Attic borders with other states, but on the borders of level fields (valleys) where they start to slope and require terracing. Second, when used as a technical term in the record of a sale *eschatia* describes cultivable land, rather than desolate wild areas. On the grounds of this epigraphic evidence I question the association of wilderness and lack of cultivation, which Vidal-Naquet summons up when he uses the term. Indeed, the epigraphic evidence points to the relativity of a spatial term such as *eschatia*, as we confront the picture of Attic lands with numerous *eschatai* scattered throughout, and not only along Attica’s external borders – a use that reflects a multiplicity of spatial perspectives, each centered on a particular territorial unit each with its own *eschatai*. Let us keep this observation in mind.

The hunt in ancient Greece: the variety of topographical locales

Finally, Vidal-Naquet uses the social practice of hunting to establish another double link between the *eschatai* and the ephebes’ presence at the forts. But despite the popularity of the idea among scholars, we have no evidence to suggest that the ephebes stationed at the forts in the fourth century BCE engaged in hunting.⁵³ In contrast to the Spartan *kryptoi*, Athenian ephebes would not have had to hunt for food: they were provided for by the city. Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 42) tells us that the state (*demos*) provided one drachma a head per day for rations, and a *sôphronistês*, a disciplinary officer, was in charge of collecting this money and buying provisions for common meals. Again, the link that Vidal-Naquet relies on is spatial. He refers to Pierre Chantraine who has noted that hunting is linked fundamentally with the *agros* in Greece,⁵⁴ “the land that lies beyond the cultivated area,” and Vidal-Naquet adds, “that is, with the *eschatai*, the borderlands of Greek cities.”⁵⁵

This is where the link fails. Hunting is said to take place in the *agroï*, places beyond the cultivated areas, but these types of lands do not lie along the borders of states alone, but surround every village and its cultivated areas. Thus, there are *agroï* all over Attica, and so hunting is by no means limited to external borderline areas, nor does it mark these areas more than any other *agroï* inside Attica. Much work has been done on hunting in the ancient world in the last decades.⁵⁶ Robin Lane Fox makes it clear that the hunting areas were not limited to the mountains, or to the *agroï*, or to the *eschatiai*. Depending on the type of prey, hunting could occur anywhere, including the immediate vicinity of the town, even cultivated land (e.g., for hares, the prey that Melanion was said to hunt), *eschatiai* (used in the sense described above: foothills, slopes, fallow land), *agroï* (general for “fields, countryside”), as well as marshes, mountains, etc.⁵⁷ In other words, hunting took place throughout the state’s territory, and not just along its external borders. Thus Vidal-Naquet misleads us when he asserts that the forts (where the ephebes were stationed) and the locales for hunting both lay on the “wild” frontiers of Attica.

I would like to summarize here what we were able to say about the frontiers of ancient Athens, now that we have freed ourselves of the associations imposed by the structuralist opposition of center to periphery. First, we see that in ancient Athens socio-geographical conditions determined the presence of a good number of sizable settlements in the frontier areas, thus making them locales of civilization, that is: local centers of community life on a par with Athens. Second, we have found that garrison forts, though located on the frontiers, did not function in isolation from the rest of the community, but were in most cases located next to the major settlements and derived at least part of their *raison d’être* from the need of local communities to have a fortified refuge site in the vicinity and to have an armed body to patrol and protect local community’s land and other possessions.

Third, we saw that the view of land and landscape was very much dependent on the perspective of the viewers, on their relative topographical positions, and that the use of such terms as *eschatia* to describe land is good evidence for that. Finally, the discussion of hunting locales in ancient Greece provided more evidence for the relativity of the concepts of wilderness and cultivation: hunting was limited to neither and took place in a great variety of ecological locales. Hunting, therefore, cannot be associated exclusively with the borderlands of Attica. The world of the Athenian frontiers was much more socially complex than the structuralist model allows. This conclusion does not refute the legitimacy of using the concept of liminality to describe frontiers, but warns against the literal understanding of the metaphorical use.

If the structuralist approach of Vidal-Naquet conflates historical frontiers with the imaginary ones, another conceptual approach, that of landscape archaeology, offers a different perspective. This approach, developed by British archaeologists, anthropologists, and social geographers, and widely

applied in the study of prehistoric landscapes, has yet to reveal its full potential for the study of ancient Greece. In contrast to traditional archaeology, landscape archaeology is “characterized by an interest in scales of analysis wider than that of the ‘site,’ it focuses on broader matrices of settlement patterns, fields systems, territories and communications,” and it is “concerned with explaining how what we see today came to be the way it is, and with interpreting the spatial patterns and structures in the past in terms of social and economic behavior.”⁵⁸ From the landscape perspective “the specificity of place is an essential element in understanding its significance.”⁵⁹

In contrast to the structuralist view, the opposition of culture and nature is often meaningless to the landscape archaeologist, but even if it is used, it does not correspond to the opposition between center and periphery. From the perspective of landscape archaeology nature is absolute wilderness. If a place is named, inhabited, and cultivated, or socially engaged in any way, it is a cultural locale. Landscape is thus made of overlapping social locales with no hard boundaries, and the social world of the Athenian frontiers represents the culture as much as the city of Athens itself. The landscape approach acknowledges the local perspectives of different frontier communities as centers of their own, not just as peripheries of other social locales. There are aspects of the Athenian *ephebeia* that respond much better to this conceptual approach to locality than the structuralist approach. The service of ephebes in a particular deme establishes special ties between the garrison of the fort and the local community. As I have noted above, according to epigraphic evidence, it is the local community that honors ephebes for their good service. The structuralist approach emphasizes the detachment of ephebes from the civic citizen body (their liminality), the landscape approach underscores the close contact between ephebes and the frontier community (contrary to the notion of liminality), which produces a better fit with the historical evidence.

The unreliability of spatial indicators in identifying rites of passage

This brings me to my last point. We have shown that the Athenian frontiers were not invariably wild or uncivilized locales. We have seen that the activities of the ephebes at the frontiers were, as far as the evidence tells us, not antithetical to the norms of civilized community. We have also seen that the Athenian imaginary does not indiscriminately associate wilderness or anti-social behavior with frontiers, but rather with mountains. It seems to me that we have to conclude that the topographical position of the Athenian ephebes on the frontiers does not impart to them the characteristics of liminality. This does not mean, however, that the ephebes were not marked as characters of special status in the Athenian society. It simply means that it is not their spatial position that makes them liminal, but some other criteria.

We can extend this observation beyond the case of the ephebes, and to another commonly identified case of liminal activity in ancient Athens, but one which presents a reversal of the symbolism of center-periphery traditionally evoked by the structuralist view of initiation: the ritual actions of the *arrhephoroi*, two Athenian girls, aged between seven and eleven, who were selected to serve Athena (Pausanias 1.27.3). These girls spent almost a year living on the Acropolis next to the temple of Athena Polias, and although we do not know exactly what they did in the course of their stay, at the end of it they enacted the ritual of *arrhephoria*: they put on their heads sealed packages given to them by the priestess of Athena (neither the priestess nor the girls knowing the contents) and then they descended into an underground passage and proceeded to the shrine of Aphrodite in the Gardens. The girls left their packages there and brought back new ones. Upon their return from this service, the girls were released, and a fresh pair was selected to take their place. Walter Burkert writes: "Initiation symbolism is even clearer in the service of the Athenian *arrhephoroi*, which ultimately ends in the domain of Eros and Aphrodite."⁶⁰ The separation stage is indeed clear in the case of the *arrhephoroi*. They are taken from the familiar domain of their homes, separated from the rest of the society. Thus, they occupy a marginal social position, according to the initiation formula. Their marginal position is, however, completely detached from the marginality of frontiers, for the girls are secluded in the very center of Athens, on the Acropolis.

There is another way to interpret these spatial signals. By being brought into the service of Athena the girls are promoted to a singular honor of being the nearest to the patron-deity of Athens. Being the chosen ones, they occupy the most central position in the symbolic structure of the city. The rest of the community, not being chosen, is thus excluded and is outside the center, on the symbolic periphery. Thus the *arrhephoroi*, the holders of presumably liminal status, come to occupy the center, while the rest of the community becomes peripheral to Athena on the Acropolis. The reversibility of center and periphery, so basic to the structuralist method, at the same time underscores the unreliability of the spatial position as indicator of liminality. If both center and non-center signify marginality, then any position in space can be marginal, depending on one's relative perspective. Both Van Gennep, in the early days of the initiation theory, and, most recently, Versnel have remarked on this phenomenon.⁶¹ The liminal stage of the rite of passage cannot be identified on the basis of the topographical position alone; it has to be marked with liminal experiences, and the latter may occur in a variety of topographical locales without making the activities that take place there any more or any less liminal.

It is instructive, therefore, to observe that the presence of the ephebes on the frontiers did not mean that they were engaged in characteristically liminal, i.e., wild or antisocial behavior. While stationed on frontiers, the Athenian ephebes presumably spent much of their time training in groups and serving

at the forts together with other fellow ephebes. Such placement – within the group of “others like you” – called for little demarcation of an individual’s liminality: at least in relation to each other the ephebes were not liminal. On the contrary, it is in the civic contexts where the whole community was involved, that the ephebes’ special status had to be marked with role reversal and inversion of the norm. It is when they were mixing with other adult and adolescent members of the community, that they had to be distinguished through the special roles they were assigned to perform. We should note that those occasions that dramatized the ephebes’ liminality were not limited to the frontier areas, but took place in a variety of topographical locations throughout Attica: on the borders, in the center, and in between. Let us consider three areas of social life in Athens where ephebes had special roles to play related to their transitional status and where they appear in the midst of community life, not at the frontiers.

First, patrolling the countryside. When we consider ephebic military service, we tend to focus on the garrison duty at the Attic forts, forgetting or omitting the fact that ephebes were also involved in the patrolling of the countryside. Aeschines (*De falsa legatione* 167) twice mentions his service as a “patrolman” (*peripolos*) and calls his fellow-servicemen “co-ephebes” (*synepheboi*). From Xenophon (*Poroi* 4.52) it seems evident that standing guard-duty at the forts and patrolling of the countryside were assignments of two distinct groups of ephebes. Aristotle (*Ath. Pol.* 42.4) also mentions guarding and patrolling as two types of service, without saying whether every ephebe would perform these duties at some point or another, or whether some were permanently guarding, and others permanently patrolling. Whatever the answer, it is clear that at least some ephebes were not permanently fixed at the forts, but moved across the Attic countryside, thereby bringing themselves into immediate contact with local communities,⁶² not in the utter isolation and wilderness usually attributed to these spatial locales by the structuralist view of frontiers.

Religious festivals were another social sphere where ephebes played a prominent public role. In this area, again, far from being isolated from the community of citizens, the ephebes are doing their part for the benefit of the community. We know of a number of festivals where the ephebes participated in processions (Eleusinia, City Dionysia, Panathenaia, feast of Artemis Agrotera), played important roles in sacrificial rituals (Proerosia, Hephaestea) or competed in the athletic contests (Munychia, Diisoteria, Oschophoria).⁶³ These festivals took place throughout Attica.

The third important area is the theater. John Winkler advanced an intriguing hypothesis that the ephebes performed in the tragic-satyric choruses during the City Dionysia. He also assembled evidence that establishes parallels and even equivalency between military training and choral performances, thus making the theatrical engagements of the ephebes entirely consistent with both their liminal status and their military service.⁶⁴ In

addition, there is some evidence that the ephebes had a block of seats in the theatre of Dionysos on the Acropolis set aside for them.⁶⁵ Thus, again it is not the topographic position, but the particular social roles and actions that characterize the ephebes. Reinmuth lists other public engagements of the ephebes in post-Lycurgan Athens: “colourful parades and reviews of the *epheboi* uniformed in distinctive black *chlamys* and *petasos*, employment as an honor guard at sessions of the Ekklesia, formal investiture with sword and shield held annually in the theatre with éclat and pomp.”⁶⁶

Prior to Lycurgan modifications to the organization of the *ephebeia*, which made it a continuous service throughout the two-year period, the ephebes’ involvement in the community was even more pronounced. In the early fourth and in the fifth centuries BCE, the *ephebeia* “like all other military units carried out its duties for only part of the year during the two years’ liability for service,” and the ephebes were “free to follow their own pursuits even as the older citizens during the part of the year not occupied by military duties.”⁶⁷ Thus, I would suggest that it is not their topographic location that marks Athenian ephebes stationed at the frontier forts as initiates, but the age- and status-related activities, in which the Athenian young men were asked to participate, as well as periods of inactivity caused by the demands of their military training (Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 42). Their topographic position on the frontiers is, therefore, a deceptive sign of initiation.

Ephebes, young Athenian men from about sixteen to twenty, were both an age-group (already not children, i.e., they have reached puberty, but not yet adult men) and a status group (not yet citizens with full civic rights). Athenian society distinguished this age-status group by assigning them social roles that corresponded to their transitional state in life. These roles of the ephebes were played out in various topographic locales, both on the borders of the state and in the civic center of Athens, on the Acropolis, as well as in between the periphery and the center. The spatial factor, therefore, fails to be a crucial one in the definition of an Athenian ephebe, while their social activities better reflect their transitional or liminal status in the Athenian community.

Conclusion

It is quite apparent, therefore, that the frontiers of ancient Athens cannot indiscriminately be labeled spaces of liminality. We have to acknowledge that the Athenian frontiers included not only mountain ridges and coastal lines, but large urban settlements, small villages, and dispersed farmsteads, and so present to us a complex spatial environment which does not easily fit the idea or image of a wild and unruly domain. The fact that the ephebes were placed on the Attic frontiers (for explicit military purposes, Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 42) was for Vidal-Naquet an important sign of their liminality, but this insight was apparently generated more by his structuralist approach than by the evidence, and can be accepted only as a metaphoric description operating within a

particular interpretive model, and not as a literal definition of the frontiers of ancient Athens.

The persuasiveness of Vidal-Naquet's interpretation of the Athenian *ephebeia* is a matter of each scholar's personal opinion; my goal here is to reveal its metaphorical nature (enlightening and productive in its own way), and to warn against the literal readings of it. My most important objective is to disassociate Athenian frontiers from the idea of liminality. I hope, in the writing of this essay, to have both vindicated the social complexity of the historical Athenian frontiers and to have further demonstrated the enduring rhetorical power of Vidal-Naquet's interpretation.⁶⁸

Notes

- 1 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 106–28, first published as Vidal-Naquet (1968). With all due understanding of the difference, for the purposes of this essay the terms “rite of passage” and “initiation” will be used interchangeably. Initiation is here understood as an instrument in the hands of the community to regulate the preparation and timely promotion of young members of the community to full adult rights; see De Polignac (1995) 60 and Vidal-Naquet (1986) 106.
- 2 I use the term “the imaginary” as a literal translation of “l’imaginaire” in the sense it is used by Loraux (1986) and (1993), who refers to “the city’s self-image,” how it sees itself in fantasy, with a large element of idealization and wish fulfillment”; see the note of Loraux’s translator, C. Levine, in Loraux (1993) 3.
- 3 Vidal-Naquet (1986) xix.
- 4 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 127.
- 5 The phrase “initiation paradigm” refers throughout this essay to the original formulation developed by Van Gennep (1960), first published as Van Gennep (1909).
- 6 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 106. The question of what historical form of training (*paideia*), if any, preceded the *ephebeia* of the fourth century BCE is a legitimate and worthwhile question to ask, but it is not pursued by Vidal-Naquet.
- 7 Tilley (1999) 10–11: “All use of models in the social sciences is metaphorical in nature. All social scientific texts are motivated by an art of persuasion in which authors employ the powers of metaphor in conjunction with a presentation of empirical materials, or evidence, to convince their readers of the veracity and significance of the statements they are making.” The theory of metaphors has long ceased to be a sole domain of linguists and literary critics. Anthropology has contributed to the theory of metaphor; see Fernandez (1991) 9 (“the insistence upon the role of culture in the formation of metaphoric models with which various people reason”) and Quinn (1991). On the function of metaphors in culture, see Tilley (1999) 3–35. The literature on the theory of metaphor is enormous, and I cite only those works that directly illustrate my point.
- 8 Cf. Black (1962), Hesse (1970), and Eliade (1975). In the words of Ricoeur (2001) 315: “In scientific language a model is essentially a heuristic device which serves to break up an inadequate interpretation and to blaze a trail toward a new, more adequate interpretation.” For Mary Hesse it is an instrument of “re-description.” This double movement (the heuristic fiction and re-description) we also find in a metaphor.
- 9 Sartre (1979), Kahn (1979), Vernant (1984), amongst others.

- 10 De Polignac (1984); in English translation De Polignac (1995); revision in Alcock and Osborne (1994) 3–18.
- 11 De Polignac (1995) 32–88.
- 12 See, e.g., Tilley (1999) 14, 8: “Metaphors perform their work through the establishment of a tension between two or more terms in the sentence through the violation of established linguistic codes. The metaphorical utterance then serves to reduce this tension by means of the creation of a novel and striking semantic pertinence within the sentence as a whole . . . Metaphors provide a means by which we can connect together objects, events and actions that appear to be empirically (factually) disparate and unconnected.” The two domains of a metaphor are alternatively called tenor and vehicle, focus and frame, principal and secondary subject; Tilley (1999) 15.
- 13 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 108.
- 14 Two senses of the term “*ephebe*” should be distinguished: (1) *ephebes* as an age-group, from the onset of puberty to twenty years of age when young men gained full access to citizenship rights; (2) *ephebes* as young men of eighteen–twenty undergoing military training and service in Attica in the fourth century BCE and later. Winkler (1990) 30, following Gauthier (1976) 190–5, believes that Xenophon’s use of circumlocutions (“those who are assigned to” *Poroi* 4.52) to describe groups of *ephebes* with different tasks suggests that the term “*ephebes*” was “too ambiguous” for his purpose, “mainly referring to an age-class but not everyone in that class.” It must be clearly understood that Vidal-Naquet is interpreting the *ephebeia* in the second sense of the term, that is, the service of young Athenian men on the frontiers of Attica in the fourth century BCE.
- 15 LaBarbe (1953) and after him Vidal-Naquet (1986) 98–9 and 108–9 believed that the offering of the *koureion* celebrated the onset of puberty and that it took place at sixteen. Even if the former supposition is true, we have no clear evidence that the *koureion* itself was linked to any specific age, as Lambert (1998) 164–7 demonstrates. It is reasonable to assume that the ancients acknowledged the fact that every individual matures on his or her own schedule and that they did not regulate the timing of the “coming of age” ritual.
- 16 The earliest sources: Hellanicus, *FGrH* 4 F125 = 323aF2s3 (Scholiast T on Plato, *Symposium* 208d); Ephorus, *FGrH* 70 F22, etc. Full list in Vidal-Naquet (1986) 123 n. 15.
- 17 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 109.
- 18 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 113.
- 19 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 115.
- 20 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 117.
- 21 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 119.
- 22 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 120.
- 23 Van Gennep (1960) 4, 13, 15, 21.
- 24 Turner (1964); see Versnel (1993) 60, n. 113 on the influence of Turner’s work on the applications of the concept of liminality.
- 25 Versnel (1993) 60ff.
- 26 In some sense, it is a meta-metaphor: just as territorial passage was used by Van Gennep as a metaphor for all other rites dramatizing transitions and changes, so a rite of passage is used as a metaphor for various non-ritual expressions of transitory states.
- 27 Tilley (1999) 8.
- 28 Black (1962) 236–8.
- 29 Cf. Loraux (1993).

- 30 See note 15.
- 31 Stephen Lambert (1998) 150–1 points out that the “Apatouria aside from the myth was not concerned characteristically with *ephebeia* . . . the festival was more about the control, maintenance, and affirmation of kinship and of membership in society at every level.”
- 32 In both cases they are ephebes, although Vidal-Naquet glosses over the fact that the ephebes of the ritual are sixteen year-olds, while the ephebes in the military training are over eighteen.
- 33 Berggren (1963) 244–5 identifies this loss of distance between the principal and the secondary subjects of the metaphor as the “most serious, dangerous, and interesting” form of the abuse of metaphor: “myth results when the mask, lens filter, or construing subject is mistaken for or equated with the subject construed. By suppressing those aspects of the principal subject which are not amenable to the subsidiary subject, or by allowing the subsidiary subject to exert an undetected influence on the principal subject, the difference between the two referents of the metaphorical sign focus tends to be lost altogether. The metaphor is turned into, not only a literal truth, but *the* literal truth about the principal subject in question.”
- 34 Tilley (1999) 20–1; an example of the abuse of the term “marginal,” whereby the metaphor is utterly mortified and loses its ability to produce meaning is in Osborne (1994) 158: “It is attractive to see the Salaminioi owing their responsibility for providing the marginal adults for this festival centered on a marginal sanctuary to their own marginal status as refugees from territory that was itself marginally Athenian.”
- 35 See notes 9–10 above and Mitchell-Boyask (1999) 43: “The placement of the ephebe at the literal boundaries of the polis symbolizes his liminal position in society, and Hyppolitus’ activities around the city’s wild border reflect the ephebes’ frontier patrols engaging in solitary, nocturnal, guerrilla, and generally antihoplite combat.”
- 36 E.g. Goette (1999) 160–7.
- 37 Petrakos (1999), vol. I, 47–306; Ober (1985) 135–7; Travlos (1988) 389, 400–3, pl. 502–7.
- 38 Petrakos (1999) nos. 102 and 103.
- 39 Noack (1927) 202ff; Ober (1985) 178–9. A testimony to the ephebic involvement in the life of the local community are inscriptions recording honors voted to ephebes of two tribes by the deme of Eleusis in 334/3; *IG II²* 1156 = Reinmuth (1971) no. 2, ll.45–51; *IG II²* 1189 = Reinmuth (1971) no. 3.
- 40 Travlos (1988) 405–7 (pl. 508, 536–42); Goette (1999) 166.
- 41 See Fig. 5.1 on page 95 for the sites mentioned here. For more discussion, see Munn (1993) 19. Aphidna: Ober (1985) 140–1; Oinoe: Ober (1985) 155: “Presumably in times of peace the fortified circuit continued to house at least some of the residents of Oinoe;” Eleutherai: Travlos (1988) 170–1; Ober (1985) 160–3 considers Eleutherai an Attic fort; J. Camp, following F.A. Cooper, argues that Eleutherai is best understood as a Boeotian fortification (Camp (1991) 200.
- 42 Osborne (1987) strongly argues this point.
- 43 Thuc. 2.16.1; Ober (1985) 21–2 and note 16.
- 44 Osborne (1985) 37ff.
- 45 Lambert (1997) 225ff.
- 46 Ober (1985).
- 47 Munn (1993) 18.
- 48 Munn (1993) 26–7.

- 49 See notes 38–9.
- 50 Munn (1993) 28.
- 51 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 109.
- 52 Lambert (1997) 228.
- 53 Barringer (2001) 47–59 studies the visual representations of the hunt in ancient Greece and addresses the relationship between the hunt and the Athenian ephebes; she concludes (p. 53): “But, although Athenian vase painting demonstrates a clear simile and even metaphor for hunting and warfare, and associates both with the aristocracy, there is no visual evidence that hunting was part of initiation in Athens in preparation for military service. Moreover, vase paintings do not clearly display polar opposites of types of hunting corresponding to age groups but rather suggest a continuum along which one can mark necessary levels of courage or speed with no obvious link to age.”
- 54 Chantraine (1956) 32–65.
- 55 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 177.
- 56 See Barringer (2001) for the latest comprehensive study, and the most up-to-date bibliography.
- 57 Lane Fox (1996) 119–53.
- 58 Everson and Williamson (1998) 1.
- 59 Tilley (1994) 11. It should be pointed out, however, that recognition of the specificity of each place does not automatically provide an answer to what that specificity is or means.
- 60 Burkert (1985) 264.
- 61 Van Gennep (1960) 12, 18 called it “the pivoting of the sacred;” Versnel (1993) 64–6.
- 62 Munn (1993) 18–29 stresses the role of forts as refuge-sites and the role of garrisons and patrols in the countryside “in providing local armed presence to protect citizenry against animal theft or other forms of brigandage.”
- 63 The list is not exhaustive. Examples are taken from Parke (1977) 59, 65, 74, 139, 153, 168, 173, and Winkler (1990) 36–7. Most of the evidence is from the Hellenistic period.
- 64 Winkler (1990) 47–58.
- 65 Scholia to Aristophanes *Birds* 794, Pollux, *Lexicon* 4.122, Hesychius, s.v. *bouleutikon*; Winkler (1990) 38, n. 54.
- 66 Reinmuth (1971) 132.
- 67 Reinmuth (1971); the quotations are from pages 133 and 129.
- 68 I would like to thank all the participants in the conference “Beyond Initiation” for their comments and responses to my original presentation. I am also grateful to Kevin Daly for sharing his expertise on the subject of the Athenian *ephebeia* with me in the early formative stages of this article. I have also greatly benefited from the comments of Michael H. Jameson, and Ian Morris on the earlier versions of the paper. Finally, I owe special thanks to Chris Faraone for his suggestions at different stages of the revision of the article. While the merits of this article are in large part due to the helpful critique of these friends and colleagues, the opinions expressed and all the errors that remain are mine alone.

Part IV

INITIATION AND THE MALE COMMUNITY

ADOLESCENT HAIR-GROWING AND HAIR-CUTTING RITUALS IN ANCIENT GREECE

A sociological approach

David D. Leita

When we refer to a Greek ritual performed by boys or adolescent males as an “initiation rite,” we are implicitly invoking the concept, now more than a century old, of “tribal initiation.” A rite of tribal initiation, in the narrowest sense of the term, is a singular public rite performed by members of an age cohort that is necessary and sufficient for their admission to adult privileges and responsibilities within the community. Few classical scholars have thought that the evidence from ancient Greece indicates the existence, during the historical period, of tribal initiation rites so narrowly defined. But many have felt that the concept of tribal initiation is useful as a heuristic model, provided that one introduces certain qualifications to the definition of tribal initiation. For example, the “adult privileges and responsibilities” classicists tend to focus on are those that come specifically with citizenship: so young Greek men are “initiated” into the citizen class or even the hoplite citizen class. The “age cohort” in question is therefore restricted to the sons of citizen men, and many maturation rites are in fact performed by representatives of this class only. Finally, some scholars acknowledge that in many cities there is no single rite that is “necessary and sufficient” for admission to citizenship. In Athens, for example, induction into a phratry, induction into a deme, and swearing the oath of citizenship took place on three separate occasions over a period of two years. But these qualifications have not altered the basic assumption of the tribal initiation model, namely that initiation is a discrete ritual event or series of events that transforms a “before” into an “after.” Nor is the tribal initiation model fundamentally changed by Van Gennep’s tripartite division of maturation rites (and other rites of passage) into separation, liminal, and reintegration phases.¹ Indeed, the structuralist approach to Greek maturation rites, which takes Van Gennep as its point of departure, far from abandoning

the tribal initiation model, actually presents the discrete binary logic of the older tribal initiation model in its purest, most abstract form.²

But when one considers how different this model is from contemporary anthropology's approach to such rites, one gets the feeling that the field of classics has been left behind in the hundred years since classics first borrowed its model from anthropology. Contemporary anthropologists, or at least contemporary Anglo-American anthropologists, do not talk much at all about Van Gennep's tripartite division or even much about tribal initiation itself. The focus of ritual studies in general these days is on ritual as a "contested space for social action and identity politics."³ And social identity is now typically thought of as being created and maintained through *performance*, not only in highly marked ritual settings but also in everyday practice.⁴ This contemporary approach to ritual in general has two implications for the study of rites involving children and adolescents, including those practiced in ancient Greece. First, it suggests that one consider not only the rites themselves, but also the social practices out of which such rites originate: the rites, in other words, must be understood within the context of a larger anthropology of adolescence. This presents a particular challenge to classicists, because our evidence is much less diverse and textured and it reflects many fewer voices than that available to the modern anthropologist. Nevertheless, I will suggest some ways in which the classicist can begin to approximate the thick description of the anthropologist.

Second, the contemporary approach to ritual leads one to focus on the sorts of social identities that are performed by adolescents and on how the social meaning given to these performances is negotiated by the performers themselves and various groups within the larger audience. Classicists have tended to pay more attention to the structure of maturation rites than to the content, and as a result have proceeded with a rather limited conception of the identities that are created in these rites, most scholars seeing them as creating only "adults" or only "adult citizens." Such a narrow conception of identity might be adequate for the traditional societies upon which the tribal initiation model was originally based, but the identity of a young man in ancient Greece was more complex than that of a young man in the simplest traditional societies. Small-scale, traditional societies are for the most part organized according to kinship and gender, and male transition rites in such societies are conceived largely in terms of a change in the latter: the (feminine) boy becomes a fully masculine man.⁵ The social fabric of a typical Greek polis, on the other hand, was differentiated not only by kinship and gender, but also by social class (liturgical class, free citizens, resident aliens, slaves, etc.) and membership in voluntary associations (religious cults, political clubs, etc.). So the process of growing up in ancient Greek society involved not just a simple transition from non-adult to adult, or even non-citizen to citizen, but involved the assumption of many different social identities, which together made up the complex social personality of a member of a complex society. So the performative iterations we expect to see of a Greek adolescent are quite diverse: he needs to make a claim to

generic identities such as “man” and “citizen,” but also to more individual ones such as “member of the elite (*kaloi kai agathoi*)” or “member of the Alcmeonid *genos*” or “initiate of the Eleusinian Mysteries” or “practitioner of the metallurgy trade.” No one “tribal initiation” ritual or series of rituals could dramatize all the identities of so many different individuals.

We need to remember, too, that ritual performance of this sort is not one-way communication. Although the adolescent performer may attempt to control the meaning of the performance that he embodies, his audience – parents, political officials, women and girls, peers – is at the same time attempting to inscribe its own meanings onto the adolescent performer’s body. A sociological approach to adolescent transition rituals will attempt to describe this polyphonic texture: it will be sensitive to the many different aspects of the Greek adolescent’s identity and to the way this identity is created, in ritual and in everyday practice, through a sort of negotiation between adolescents and other constituencies within society.

I propose to demonstrate the explanatory power of what I have termed the “sociological approach” by considering a rather minor class of ritual performed by Greek girls and boys when they came of age, and that is the ritual growing and cutting of their hair. We should define at the outset what is to be included, for the purposes of our analysis, in the category of “ritual growing and cutting of hair,” because my conception of the subject of analysis differs quite a bit from that of most classical scholars. Most scholars focus on the ritual act of cutting the hair and offering it to a god or hero in cult, and indeed this focus accords with traditional definitions of ritual as a marked and discrete act (the cutting) that takes place in sacred space (offered to a god or hero in cult). My conception includes these ritual cuttings in cult, but goes beyond them in two important ways. First, I include not only the *act* of cutting, but also the *process* of growing this hair to be cut and offered to the god or hero. The Greeks refer to this as “growing hair for the god,”⁶ language that suggests that it is no less sacred an undertaking than the act of cutting it and offering it within the precinct. The only difference is that the ritual growing is an ongoing activity (a process) and one that crosses the boundaries between sacred and profane space, since most of the time that the adolescent is engaged in “growing his hair for the god,” he is in profane space, living at home and participating in his normal daily activities.

Which brings us to a second way in which my conception of the scope of “ritual growing and cutting of hair” differs from the standard view: I do not see a clear boundary between sacred and profane, public and private, ritual and practice, but instead a boundary that is fluid, if not actually blurred. Fluidity is indicated both by the variety of recipients of the offerings, who range from Olympian deities worshipped in major state cults with well-defined precincts (e.g., Apollo at Delphi) to nature spirits on the margins of city life (e.g., the river Kephisos in Attica, the nymphs in Euboean

Amarnthos), and by the fact that these rites tend to be private ceremonies whose occasion is chosen by the dedicant and his family (more below). If these rites are largely private and involve a long process of ritual growth before an act of ritual cutting, can we really distinguish them from other private hair growing and cutting performed by adolescents that is not explicitly linked to the cult of a god or hero? From the performative perspective of the adolescent himself, ritual hair-growing and hair-cutting and non-ritual hair-growing and hair-cutting are not all that different. The erosion of the boundary between grooming ritual and grooming practice seems to support the view of many anthropologists that ritual grows out of practice and that practice, in turn, is informed by ritual.⁷ We shall consider some examples on the profane, or practice, side of the border in the final section of this paper and will there explore in more depth the relevance of these examples to the subject of ritual hair-growing and -cutting.

Hair-growing and hair-cutting rites, then, seem ideally suited to our sociological approach: (1) they occupy a cultural space (i.e., grooming) where ritual and everyday practice overlap; (2) they focus our attention on the adolescent body and on the embodiment of identity in performance; and (3) this performance is invested, as we shall see, with many different, often contradictory, meanings.

Ritual hair-growing and hair-cutting by adolescents in the Greek world

The evidence for rites of hair-growing and hair-cutting comes from all over the Greek world. And it comes from all periods: while most of the rites I discuss are attested first in the Hellenistic and imperial periods, there is considerable evidence of such rites already in the classical and archaic periods. The performers are young people of both sexes. Girls typically cut their hair prior to marriage.⁸ The age of the boys is more variable: they are referred to as *paides*, a broad term that can describe males from childhood to the threshold of adulthood, and as *meirakia* and *ephēboi*, terms that refer more specifically to adolescents; our only reference to an exact age is a dedicatory epigram from the third century BCE that describes the hair-cutting of a four-year-old boy.⁹ This variation in age may reflect not only the different customs of different times and places, but also, as we shall see, the freedom that individuals had in deciding when to perform the rite.

The rite seems, in most cases, to have been a private family affair. It is perhaps surprising that few, if any, of the rites can be said, with certainty, to have been performed by an age cohort *en masse*.¹⁰ The best candidate for such a cohort rite is the hair-cutting that Hesychius and the Suda claim took place in honor of Artemis on the third day of the Apatouria at Athens, when young men offered an animal sacrifice called the *koureion* and were inducted into their phratries.¹¹ But the presence of hair-cutting at this festival is in fact rather

weakly attested (only in the late lexicographical compilations of Hesychius and the Suda), and there is good evidence that Athenian adolescents actually cut their hair on other occasions instead.¹²

Those rites about which we know both the recipient of the offering and the geographical location may be divided into two groups. One group consists of offerings to heroes or heroines, and these show a strong kinship with funereal hair-cutting: the custom of cutting hair in Corinth at the tomb of Medea's children is associated also with the wearing of black cloaks; the hair offerings maidens make at the tomb of Iphinoe in Megara are accompanied by *choai*, "funeral libations"; and Euripides says that Troezenian maidens will cry tears of grief when they cut their hair for Hippolytus.¹³ As a result, these offerings function, at least in part, to maintain good relations between the living and the dead, who could otherwise threaten the maturation of the child.¹⁴ The second group are offerings made to gods, including river gods. They are frequently made pursuant to a vow (*euchē*), often made by a parent while the adolescent is still a child or even just born;¹⁵ they too are designed to help assure successful maturation, but they seem to work by establishing a positive relationship with the kourotrophic deity rather than by averting the negative influences of the dead. These rites thus unfold over a period of time: there is a vow, a period of hair growth that might last for many years, and then a ceremonial cutting. Thus our sources for this type of ritual frequently mention a form of the verb *trephō*, which focuses our attention on the "growth" or "cultivation" of this hair.¹⁶ The hair-cutting in this second group is thus very different from the hair-cutting that takes place in a funeral context: in the former situation, there is a removal of hair specially grown for the purpose of ritual cutting and the result is the normal coiffure of an adult; in the funeral situation, there is a spontaneous subtraction from the normal amount of hair, so that the mourner in effect "wears" his loss on his head. In other words, the second group of adolescent hair-cutting rites combines ritual growing with ritual cutting, whereas funereal rites involve only ritual cutting. The type of hair that is cut in the first group of adolescent hair-cutting rites is not specified in our sources: although these rites reveal a strong kinship with funereal hair-cutting, we do not know whether they involve a spontaneous renunciation of hair or the cutting of hair specially grown for the purpose.

I wish to focus on the rites in the second group, as the performative possibilities of these are more obvious: (1) they are for the most part private occasions in which there is no fixed ritual script – one can choose the age at which the offering is made, often the deity, the attendant offerings, and other aspects of the celebration; and (2) they involve a period of deliberate, marked growth of hair on the head, and thus afford additional opportunities for symbolic expression. Most of the rites in this second group are boys' rituals, and so I will concentrate on them.

The hair-cutting ceremony: performative possibilities (I)

We may begin with a consideration of the hair-cutting ceremony itself, since most scholars who have discussed adolescent hair rituals in Greece and elsewhere have focused on the act of cutting and its symbolic meaning. Some have seen it as a magical means of avoiding the pollution or evil spirits that threaten the adolescent in transition by symbolically transferring the pollution or the attention of the spirits to a lock of hair that is cut and disposed of.¹⁷ Others see the cutting and offering as a *pars pro toto* restitution to the kouroutrophic deity who presided over the stage of life the adolescent leaves behind.¹⁸ Those of a more psychoanalytic bent see the cutting of hair as a symbolic castration: in the context of an adolescent transition rite, hair-cutting thus functions as a means of incorporating the young person into the disciplinary apparatus of society.¹⁹ Finally, some scholars view the cutting of hair as a structural marker that distinguishes an abstract “before” from an abstract “after,” without there necessarily being any specific semantic content in the hair itself or in its cutting.²⁰ There is something of value in each of these interpretations, but my focus in this essay is not on the ritual act of cutting and on the inherent meaning thereof, a subject that has been adequately explored by other scholars. Instead, I wish to focus on some of the meta-ritual aspects of the occasion, on the choices that participants have available to them in deciding how they will perform the ritual. For it is here, where participants go beyond the ritual script, that individual performance becomes interesting.

Most of the choices made regarding the execution of the rite were made by the family, and indeed the family was involved in the ceremony on so many levels that one is tempted to look at hair-cutting rituals as, in part, a demonstration of family identity. The whole process begins with a vow to the god to keep the boy’s hair uncut in exchange for the god’s protection, and since this vow was typically made during childhood or even infancy, it was naturally made by the boy’s parents. We have evidence of this already in the case of Achilles: it was Peleus who made the vow that Achilles would offer his hair to the river Spercheios when he returned from Troy (*Iliad* 23.144–9). Of course, Achilles is somewhat of a special case, for the vow, which seems to have been made originally during childhood and sought to gain the god’s assistance in bringing Achilles to manhood, was later extended to gain the god’s protection while the young Achilles was at war;²¹ and then, when Achilles finally does cut his hair at Troy, kouroutrophic hair-cutting and funereal hair-cutting are tragically merged.

It is probably in great part because the hair-cutting ceremony originates in a vow made by one or both parents that parents, especially fathers, play a large role in the ceremony itself. We have evidence of fathers choosing the sanctuary at which the boy’s hair would be cut,²² and of deciding whom to invite to the ceremony.²³ And sometimes even the offering itself is made by the father or mother on behalf of the son. Consider three inscriptions from the

island of Paros from the third century CE that record hair offerings made to Asclepius and Hygieia. Two of them record the offering of a boy's "childhood hair" (*paidikên tricha*) (IG 12.5.173.3, 5), and in both cases the offering is made by the mother, in the second case with the secondary participation²⁴ of the father. One might suppose that these offerings are made by the parents because the boys are too young to make them in their own name. But a third inscription (IG 12.5.173.4) commemorates the offering of what is called "ephebic hair" (*ephêbiên tricha*) – most likely the hair of an adolescent – and here too it is a parent who makes the offering, although in this case it is the father rather than the mother. One can imagine reasons why the first two offerings are made by mothers, the third by a father: perhaps the father of the boy in inscription 173.3 and the mother of the boy in 173.4 were no longer alive. But it is also tempting to suppose that fathers played a more prominent role in these offerings as their sons grew older, a reflection of the boy's gradual movement from the sphere of women to the sphere of men. And it was not only fathers and mothers who might offer a boy's or adolescent's hair in their own name: in a "first beard" offering from the first century BCE, we hear of an older brother joining (*rhexomen*, "we offer") in the offering of his younger brother's facial hair (A.P. 6.242).

This leads us to another interesting family pattern: offerings made by brothers. In an inscription from Thessalian Thebes from the late Hellenistic or early imperial period (IG 9.2.146), two brothers, Philombrotos and Aphthonetos, make a hair offering to Poseidon.²⁵ Although Poseidon does sometimes receive locks of hair from sailors who have survived a shipwreck or a storm at sea,²⁶ this offering is most likely made as part of a rite of passage.²⁷ First, the locks that are sculpted in relief on the stele that records the offering are long and carefully braided,²⁸ and therefore more likely a representation of the special locks grown by children and adolescents (more below) than a highly stylized representation of adult hair spontaneously cut after a shipwreck. Indeed, these long braids resemble the braids we see frequently elsewhere on the heads of boys and adolescents in Greek sculpture.²⁹ Second, Poseidon, in Thessaly, seems to play an important role in the growth of children: from this region there survive three inscriptions that record offerings made to Poseidon by parents on behalf of their sons,³⁰ one of them explicitly in fulfilment of a vow.³¹

One finds even more examples of the involvement of brothers among the numerous hair offerings recorded in the Carian town of Panamara during the second and third centuries CE. One even records the offering of five Aurelius brothers (I. Str. 434). Another mentions an offering made by two pairs of brothers who are probably cousins (I. Str. 428). Yet another (I. Str. 449) records the offering of four males from the nearby town of Koliorga, three of whom are brothers; presumably the fourth is an agemate of one of the brothers or even a family slave (more in a moment). There has been some debate about whether the offerings from Panamara are in fact coming-of-

age hair offerings. The doubts arise from three factors: (1) in most cases, there is no proof that the dedicant is young; (2) some of the offerings are made by slaves or by fathers together with their sons; and (3) in a few cases, the offering is made more than once.³² But most scholars, including the most recent editor of the inscriptions, believe, as I do, that these are coming-of-age dedications,³³ and the reasons are worth considering here. First, most of our evidence for the practice of ritual hair-growing and hair-cutting in the greater Greek world is associated with young people of both sexes. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that the widespread practice of ritual growing and cutting that we see at Panamara is also associated with coming of age. Second, some of the dedicants mentioned in the Panamara inscriptions are in fact young.³⁴ And we can now point to a contemporary grave stele found in the nearby municipal center of Stratonikeia, Panamara's "county seat," if you will, that depicts the head of a boy named Threptos with a prominent sidelock on the left side of the head, most likely a representation of the type of lock cut off in honor of Zeus in neighboring Panamara (*I. Str.* 1263). Indeed, this lock is iconographically very similar to scores of others found all over the Roman empire, all on the heads of boys who would have, had they lived, eventually cut their hair for the god who protected them during childhood.³⁵ There is no reason to suppose that this lock grown by the young Threptos at Stratonikeia was grown in honor of Isis, as Goette supposes,³⁶ especially since only a few kilometers away Zeus Panamaros was accustomed to receive such offerings from males from all over the district. The evidence, then, favors seeing the Panamaran offerings as coming-of-age-offerings.

These hair offerings made by brothers in Thessalian Thebes and Panamara suggest that, in these places at least, there was no specific age at which one cut one's hair, since most of these brothers would have been of different ages. This evidence also suggests that the ritual cutting of hair was a family ritual rather than a cohort ritual, and it seems likely that one of the primary functions of these rites was to demonstrate family solidarity. In the light of this evidence from the post-classical period, we might thus wish to reconsider the hair-cutting believed by many to have taken place at the Athenian Apatouria, a rite that most scholars have viewed as one of the clearest examples of a cohort ritual in ancient Greece. While Jules LaBarbe has called our attention to one case in which a boy cut his hair and was admitted to a phratry at the age of sixteen,³⁷ we should perhaps not be so sure that all boys did it at this age. Indeed, it may make more sense to view the hair-cutting of the Apatouria, if Hesychius and the Suda are right to put it there, as an element of the largely informal family celebrations (of kinsmen known as *phrateres*) that took place at that festival.

The Panamara inscriptions raise two other interesting issues. First, the hair of slaves was also sometimes offered to the god.³⁸ These offerings were usually made by groups of slaves from the same family, usually the family of a priest; some of the slaves are explicitly described as young (e.g., *I. Str.* 412).

These slave offerings might be surprising, but we should recall, first of all, that the cult of Zeus Panamaros prided itself on being open to all males, slave or free, of whatever age, and from whatever city of origin.³⁹ And I am aware of at least one other example – albeit Roman – in which a slave boy grew a special lock of hair in order to gain the protection of a god,⁴⁰ and I suspect that this practice was much more common than is suggested by surviving dedicatory inscriptions and grave stelai, monuments that disproportionately reflect the life of free persons, and indeed wealthy free persons. What is perhaps most important about these hair offerings on behalf of slaves is that they remind us that child and adolescent hair offerings sometimes, particularly during the imperial period, had nothing to do with the acquisition of citizenship.

The second notable thing about the Panamara offerings is that in three inscriptions (out of a total of almost a hundred) fathers cut their hair along with their sons (*I. Str.* 402, 428, 463). This has, as I have mentioned, led some scholars to conclude that these hair offerings do not commemorate entry into adulthood, but rather initiation into some aspect of the cult at Panamara, possibly the mystery cult we begin to hear of in the second century CE.⁴¹ But it is also possible to understand these paternal offerings in the context of the intimate role we have seen fathers and brothers play in hair-cutting rituals elsewhere. Perhaps these three Panamara fathers saw this as an occasion for all the male members of the family, and in a burst of enthusiasm decided to offer their hair as well. Regardless of the actual motivations of these three fathers, the involvement of fathers and brothers at Panamara, Thessalian Thebes and Paros suggest that child and adolescent hair offerings functioned, in practice, as opportunities to demonstrate family solidarity and male kinship in particular; they appear not, for the most part, to have been an occasion in which a young man was initiated into citizenship status, at least not in the post-classical period.

There is one other social aspect of the hair-cutting ceremony that also merits mentioning briefly: it was an opportunity to perform not only one's family identity, but also the socio-economic standing of one's family. For example, we know that the hair offering was frequently accompanied by other offerings: in some cases, these amounted to nothing more than flatcakes and small animals (*A.P.* 6.155), but some families went so far as to sacrifice an ox (*A.P.* 6.156), an extravagant offering indeed. Peleus' vow to accompany Achilles' hair offering with a sacrifice of a hundred oxen and fifty rams may be only partly heroic hyperbole. An ambitious family might also choose to travel to a prestigious sanctuary to make an offering of hair: we hear of prominent Sicyonians traveling to Delphi in the fourth century BCE,⁴² and a dedicant from Berytus in Syria traveling to Panamara in the second century CE (*I. Str.* 405). The less fortunate could not afford to make such a statement, or even, in many cases, erect a dedicatory stele. Indeed, at Panamara, there is evidence that some inscribed their names on the stelai erected by others, either

by squeezing their name between the lines of another's inscription⁴³ or by inscribing their name in place of another.⁴⁴

The ritual growth of hair: performative possibilities (II)

The process of growing and grooming one's hair prior to ritual cutting – a period that could last for many years – also offered opportunities for performance. There were two different childhood hair growth patterns that we know about from Greek antiquity. First, a boy could grow all his cephalic hair, keeping it uncut either from birth⁴⁵ or for some shorter period. Second, he could grow one or more special locks separately from the rest of the hair, which would be kept a normal length. We hear of special names for some of these youthful locks: it was called a *skollus* at Athens, *konnos* at Sparta, *mallos* in Greek Alexandria, and *krôbylos* and *skorpios* elsewhere.⁴⁶ Pollux (2.30) describes the Athenian *skollus* as hair grown “from the side and either [allowed to fall] behind or [brought] over the forehead” and other sources describe not only sidelocks, but also backlocks and topknots. There are possible representations of these special locks in classical art: Van Hoorn has detected depictions on Greek vases and Evelyn Harrison, more recently, in Greek sculpture.⁴⁷ Von Gonzenbach and Goette have catalogued backlocks and sidelocks from the imperial period: most of these are from Italy and Roman Egypt, but examples have been found in Eleusis, Athens, Thasos, Smyrna, and Stratonikeia.⁴⁸ Some have tried to link these imperial representations directly to the cult of Isis,⁴⁹ but it now seems more likely that many different gods functioned as *kourotrophoi* during this period, not only the traditional ones like Apollo and river gods, but now also Demeter, Dionysus, and Zeus.⁵⁰

The growing hair of the adolescent, whether a special lock or hair left uncut since childhood, was capable of bearing many different meanings: some of these meanings were obviously intended by the adolescent himself, while others were imposed by parents and adult society generally. While he was still young, it was others, notably parents, who would control the meaning and to some extent comportment of that hair. But as he grew older, the boy's interest in the performative possibilities of his own hair naturally increased: to the extent that even hair that was grown for ritual cutting could be manipulated to make a fashion statement, we should perhaps consider ritual adolescent hairstyles and non-ritual adolescent hairstyles as part of the same phenomenon, at least from the performative perspective of the maturing young man (more below). Unfortunately, we have little access to the subjective meanings Greek children and adolescents attached to their hair, as we do for children in modern societies. Ancient Greek children and adolescents rarely speak through our sources. For this reason, I am going to concentrate on some of the meanings Greek adults attached to the hair of children and adolescents. But these will nevertheless give us an idea of the range of possible meanings that the adolescent himself could have invoked.

Sexual maturation

One of the associations of adolescent “hair” was obviously sexuality and physical vitality more generally.⁵¹ Growing hair was an index of a growing body. And to the extent that the Greeks thought that hair was nourished by seed within the body, a sudden burst of seed production at puberty can be expected to produce not only secondary hair, but also more and fuller cephalic hair as well.⁵² Specially grown cephalic hair might even have been thought of as a ritual substitute for the growth of secondary hair: it was certainly something that all boys were capable of in early adolescence, even those who lagged behind their contemporaries in pubertal development. The youthful hairstyles seen in the frescoes from Bronze Age Crete and Thera seem almost to have been designed to dramatize an increase in sexual vitality: the girls of Thera and the boys of Crete begin with shaved or nearly shaved heads; they are next permitted to grow a few special locks, which can become quite long; finally, they grow the hair on the rest of their head long.⁵³ There is a clear progression from “less hair” during childhood to ever “more hair” once the girls and boys reach puberty. We find a similar pattern in male hairstyles in classical Sparta: at the age of 12, shortly before puberty, boys’ heads are shaved; when they graduate from the *agela* system at roughly the age of 20, they are permitted to grow the long hair that characterized the Spartan adult.⁵⁴ Here too there is an impressive growth of hair that takes place after puberty and is linked directly to the virility of the Spartan adult male.

Femininity

Another association of a boy’s growing hair in the eyes of adults was femininity. Aeschylus described the Kouretes, mythical warrior youths, as wearing a distinctive lock of hair, which was “as delicate as that of dainty maidens” (fr. 313.1 Radt), and in Agathon’s *Thyestes*, these same Kouretes, upon cutting this hair, mourn it as a mark of their former daintiness (*truphê*). These associations were sometimes invoked to keep boys in their place, as we see in an anecdote Plutarch reports about Aristodemos, the tyrant of Cumae. Plutarch tells us that boys in Cumae, as in many other places, customarily wore their hair long well into adolescence. But the tyrant Aristodemos gave this custom a strong feminine interpretation by requiring the boys also to wear gold jewelry and requiring the girls, by way of contrast, to cut their hair short and wear ephebic cloaks over their short tunics.⁵⁵ Plutarch describes this as a deliberate insult to the boys.

We see a similar association between boyhood hair and femininity in Pausanias’ story (8.20.3) of an Arcadian youth named Leukippos, who, attempting to disguise himself as a maiden in order to infiltrate Daphne’s virgin hunting band, put on a feminine cloak and “wove the hair he was growing for the river Alpheios in the same way that maidens do.” When

Leukippos refused one day to undress and join the maidens in a bath, Daphne and her fellow maidens ripped off his transvestic disguise and, discovering him to be a male, killed him with their hunting spears. Here the assimilation of the boy's hair to feminine hair has an explicit ritual context, since Leukippos was growing his hair for later ritual cutting. This story is also important in that it presents, in somewhat abstract form, the boy's full transition to manhood: the threshold is not crossed, in this case, when the boy cuts his "feminine" hair, but when he suffers to have his feminine clothing removed and his masculine body displayed. There is a good deal of overlap here with the ideology of adolescent transvestism rituals, a topic to which we shall return shortly.

A story about the Athenian hero Theseus also illustrates the gendering of an adolescent boy's hair as feminine. When the hero first arrived in Athens from Troezen, he was wearing a tunic that reached to the ground and had his hair neatly braided (*peplegmenês*). When he was mocked by some workmen as being a "maiden on the verge of marriage" (*parthenos en bôrai gamou*), Theseus responded by unhitching some nearby oxen and hurling them into the air (Paus. 1.19.1). Once again, the feminine portrait of the adolescent combines feminine hair and feminine clothing. And the fact that his hair marks him not just as a maiden, but as one on the verge of marriage might hint at the practice of maidens of cutting their hair prior to marriage. In this story, however, Theseus makes a transition from feminine boy to masculine man neither by cutting his feminine hair (as Agathon's Kouretes) nor by casting off his feminine garb (as Leukippos), but by hurling the oxen in the air, a potent demonstration of masculine strength. But there is another story about Theseus that links his transition to manhood with the cutting of his hair. Plutarch (*Theseus* 5.1–2) tells us that he cut his adolescent hair for Apollo at Delphi and thereby gave his name both to the place where the offering was made and to the hairstyle that resulted. Plutarch also reports that this resulting hairstyle was a particularly virile one, associated with the warriors of the heroic age (more below).

Historical styles

An adolescent's hair could also invoke specific historical styles. Take the adolescent hairstyle known as the *krôbylos*, which Pollux equates with the Athenian *skollus*.⁵⁶ What is interesting about the *krôbylos* is that it is also the name of a famous old Ionian hairstyle worn by adult men and accompanied by a golden cicada pin.⁵⁷ Thucydides (1.6.3) suggests the style was a sign of Ionian luxury, but Aristophanes associates it with the heroes at Marathon (*Knights* 1321–34), so the associations are not necessarily negative. What is important is that it was felt to be an old-fashioned hairstyle already in Thucydides' and Aristophanes' day. There are hints that the adolescent *krôbylos* and similar styles were sometimes seen as invoking this older style.

Lucian makes the connection quite clear in his dialogue *The Ship*, where an Athenian character compares the topknot worn by an Egyptian youth to the style that used to be worn by adult men at Athens (*Ship* 3). But the historical associations of the adolescent *krôbylos* are probably much older than Lucian. In a dedicatory epigram by Theodoridas from the third century BCE (*A.P.* 6.156), a Euboean youth dedicates to the nymphs of Amarynthos his hair together with a cicada pin, which presumably held the hair up: this is, in fact, the only literary reference I am aware of to a cicada hairpin apart from descriptions of the old Ionian practice, and this fact makes it all the more likely that that mention of the cicada pin in this dedicatory epigram would remind the reader of the Ionian practice. And considering Euboea's Ionian linguistic and cultural heritage, such a hairstyle and ornamentation would probably invoke Euboea's own historical past. Another epigram by Theodoridas commemorates the hair-offering to Apollo of a four-year old named Krobylos (*A.P.* 6.156.1–2). If this Krobylos is the real name of the dedicant (and it was a real Greek name⁵⁸), then the homonymy with the boyhood hairstyle described by Pollux is purely fortuitous. But Gow and Page suggest that the dedication might be imaginary (as these literary dedications frequently are) and that the poet might have used the name Krobylos in order to make a pun on the boyhood lock of the same name that is imagined as being offered.⁵⁹

Another reference to the youthful *krôbylos* occurs in an anecdote preserved by Nicolaus of Damascus⁶⁰ concerning a beautiful youth named Magnes from the Ionian city of Smyrna.⁶¹ This Magnes wore long luxurious purple cloaks and had grown his hair into a *korymbos* (a synonym for *krôbylos*⁶²), which he bound up with a golden headband (cf. the golden cicada pins at Athens), and dressed in this way, he caught the attention of the Lydian tyrant Gyges and became his *paidika*. One day Magnes was singing poetry to an audience of women, including Magnesian women, and this so offended the decency of their male relatives that the men rushed in, stripped Magnes of his clothes, and cut off his hair (*FGrH* 90 F 62).

This tale reflects two common ritual patterns that turn up in a number of Greek maturation rites. The first pattern features ritual transvestism followed by ritual disrobing. The clearest example of such a ritual took place at the Ekdusia in the Cretan city of Phaistos: there the youths, prior to swearing an oath of citizenship, triumphantly cast off their feminine clothes (hence the name of the festival, Ekdusia, “festival of disrobing”) and showed, through a display of their nude male bodies, that they were ready to be admitted to the society of men.⁶³ I believe that Magnes' purple cloak can be understood in the context of ritual transvestism: it is a symbol not only of Ionian luxury,⁶⁴ but also, from the perspective of adolescent maturation, of femininity. This is a situation that the adolescent may end himself, as at Phaistos, or one that may require the intervention of adult men to sunder him from the feminine realm. From a ritual perspective, the problem with

Magnes is his strong ties to the women's quarters and to the mother, sisters, and female slaves who live there; the myth, on the other hand, represents the boy's unhealthy closeness to this feminine world both through the purple cloak that Magnes wears and through the suspicion that the Magnesians harbor about the time he spends with their female kin. There is a possibility that the Magnes myth actually originated in a local maturation ritual involving transvestism; at the very least, myth and ritual run parallel, both drawing on the same social patterns.⁶⁵

If we accept the "initiator" nature of the Magnes story, it becomes easy to detect a second ritual pattern reflected in the tale: ritual hair growth followed by ritual cutting. Nicolaus tells us that Magnes is growing (his word is *trephón*) the youthful Ionian lock called the *korymbos*, and I think we are justified in presuming that this lock would in due time be cut and probably offered to a god. In this story, however, the lock is cut not by Magnes himself, but by the Magnesians: the boyhood lock is one more symbol of his feminine boyhood and, once again, the men must intervene. And it is not only the removal of Magnes' purple cloak and cutting of his hair that mark the forced farewell to boyhood, but also the abrupt ending of his pederastic relationship with Gyges. Indeed, this is probably also why the poet Anacreon mourns when his beloved Smerdies' hair is cut off by either Smerdies himself (frag. 414 *PMG*) or by the "coarse hands" of another, either a barber or the Samian tyrant Polycrates (frag. 347 *PMG*). What troubles Anacreon is not that the boy's beauty is diminished, but that the cutting of the boy's hair marks his entry into adulthood and thus the end of the pederastic relationship. Neither Magnes' hair nor Smerdies' hair is described as having been grown long for ritual reasons, and in neither case is it said to be cut as part of a maturation ritual. But the case of Magnes, at least, is relevant to our discussion all the same: whether or not the Magnes story conceals an underlying Ionian ritual, it does reflect patterns of social thought and practice regarding the hair of a young man on the verge of manhood. And it is precisely such patterns of practice that contextualize ritual, if not actually give rise to it. We shall return again to the relevance of non-ritual practice to our discussion of hair ritual at the end of this chapter.

What is perhaps most important about the Magnes episode is that it suggests that Ionian youths who grew the *krôbylos* or *korymbos* might invoke not only a historical style associated with Ionian men of old, but also a feminine style. Here we have a clear example of how the same hairstyle could be interpreted differently: some, perhaps the adolescent himself, could see the *krôbylos* or *korymbos* as harking back to the Ionian men of old; others, such as the adult men who watch the adolescent grow and cut this hair, might see it as a mark of femininity and a symbol of the need for their intervention. We cannot say that the *krôbylos* or *korymbos* bears one meaning or the other: rather the hair becomes a symbolic focus of contestation, which reflects some very real underlying social conflicts that emerge when adult society attempts to absorb heady new members into its ranks.

Heroic hairstyles

Heroic hairstyles were also seen as possible models for the hair ritually grown by boys and adolescents for eventual ritual cutting. A very elegant example is found in a grave epigram from the second century CE found in Euboean Chalkis. There the voice of the deceased boy refers to his boyhood hairstyle and to the ritual cutting that would have taken place, had he lived, when he came of age (IG 12 Supp. 196.1179, lines 9–12):

And long locks of hair hang down the back of my head (*opithen komoôσαι*). For coming of age (*bebe*) did not cut them, but death struck first.

The hairstyle being alluded to here is a common hairstyle worn by heroes: long in the back, but cut short in the front.⁶⁶ While the hairstyle was associated with many heroes, including Theseus and Hector, it was a style associated by Homer specifically with the Euboean Abantes (*Iliad* 2.542), and the pretentious epic language of the inscription explicitly quotes Homer's description of them in the phrase *opithen komoôσαι*.⁶⁷ The Achaeans as a whole could be described as "long-haired," but only Homer's Abantes were "long-haired *in the back*." The Euboean historian Archemachos attributes the same style to the Euboean version of the Kouretes, and he uses the same phrase: *opithen komoôntas*.⁶⁸ The uncut hair of the deceased Euboean boy explicitly invokes, then, a style associated with heroes in general and with Euboean heroes – the Abantes and Euboean Kouretes – in particular. But this does not mean that the hair of the Euboean boy actually imitated this style in every respect. First of all, there is no literary or material evidence, as far as I am aware, that suggests that boys and adolescents living during the Hellenistic and imperial periods cut their hair short in the front, but kept it long in the back.⁶⁹ Secondly, the style of the Abantes and Euboean Kouretes and other heroes was an *adult* hairstyle.⁷⁰ For instance, it was only after Theseus cut his childhood frontlock and ritually offered it to Apollo at Delphi that he came to wear this style (Plutarch, *Theseus* 5). But this does not mean that the uncut backlock of boys and adolescents could not still be assimilated *in a more general way* to that of the heroes, and at least one Euboean boy assimilated his to the renowned heroic style of Euboea's own Abantes and Kouretes, just as another Euboean boy (see above), wearing the *krôbylos*, assimilated his to his Ionian ancestors.

We find another example of how adolescent ritual hairstyles can invoke heroic styles in the Cypriot city of Kition, on the margins of the Greek world. An inscription found there, written in Phoenician and dating from about 800 BCE, records the offering to Astarte of seven locks of hair by a male dedicant named Mal.⁷¹ The age of the dedicant is not specified, but the editor of the inscription and others are probably right to see this hair offering as a rite of

passage.⁷² What requires explanation is the number of locks offered, and here comparative mythology provides a valuable clue. Wenning and Zenger have shown that seven locks was an attribute of many early Mesopotamian heroes, the most famous of whom is Samson.⁷³ It could well be that the seven locks of myth originated in a ritual such as the one from Kition. But from the perspective of the young man himself, ritual follows myth: this young man, in offering seven locks of his hair, walks in the footsteps of the near eastern hero.

Laconizing

While we have plenty of examples of the way in which adults gave meaning to the consecrated hair of boys and adolescents, we have little information, as I mentioned already, about how boys or adolescents thought of their own hair. Still, I would like to offer one admittedly tentative example that comes from outside the realm of votive offerings, and that is the long hair worn by Athenian laconizers in the late fifth and early fourth centuries BCE. There were many among the elite at Athens who were sympathetic to the Spartan way of life, but those who went so far as to ape Spartan styles of dress and hairstyles came mostly from the ranks of the young (the *meirakia* and the *neoi*).⁷⁴ The affectation seems to have been particularly entrenched among the cavalry class (e.g., Aristophanes *Knights* 580), a group composed largely of wealthy young men in their twenties.⁷⁵ But the examples are not restricted to that group. In Aristophanes' *Wasps*, for example, Philocleon's son Bdelykleon (called a *neanias*, "young man," at line 532) is associated with two different Spartan hairstyles. The Chorus describes him as "growing his beard uncut" (476), this in the context of criticizing him for consorting with the Spartan Brasidas and aiming to replace Athenian democracy with a form of tyranny. Indeed, the Spartans are characterized elsewhere in old and middle comedy as wearing long unkempt beards.⁷⁶ A few lines earlier the Chorus addresses him as *komêtamunias* ("wearing his hair like Amarynias" at line 466): this is a reference not only to the figure of Amarynias, the son of Pronapos, known for his antidemocratic political leanings (see the scholia ad loc.), but also to the Spartan hairstyle he was known to wear (id.). It is interesting that later in this play (1267), this same Amarynias is described as one of those who wore the *krôbylos* hairstyle (a style characterized by a prominent forelock): it seems that in late fifth century Athens the *krôbylos* sometimes had laconizing associations (scholia ad 1267), even though these associations were probably absent a century earlier, when the style was worn by the Ionian heroes of Marathon, and in the epigrams from Euboea more than a century later (see above). What is important for our purposes here is that the *neanias* Bdelykleon is associated with two different styles of Spartan hair – long cephalic hair (possibly a version of the *krôbylos* style) and long, unkempt facial hair – and with pro-Spartan oligarchic political views. Indeed the case of Bdelykleon suggests that

such affectations were not necessarily limited to the extremely wealthy or to members of the Athenian cavalry, but may have been a style adopted by many young men of the day.

The case of Pheidippides in Aristophanes' *Clouds* points in the same direction. The youth's father, Strepsiades, complains that Pheidippides "has grown his hair long, rides horses and chariots, and even dreams of horses" (lines 14–16). The association between long hair and horses suggests once again the laconizing affectations of the aristocratic youths who were members of the Athenian cavalry. Still it is interesting that in the *Clouds* the associations with Sparta and oligarchy are not explicit, as they were in the previous year in the *Knights* (424 BCE) and in the following year in the *Wasps* (422 BCE) (see above). There are two possible explanations for this. First, it is possible that long hair in the 420s was not exclusively a Spartan style, but was a more generic youthful style, which was sometimes explicitly assimilated to the long hair worn by Spartan adults either by the wearers themselves or (perhaps with disapproval) by their elders. Or, if the long hair worn by many wealthy Athenian youths was primarily associated with Sparta, it may be that Aristophanes in the *Clouds* has chosen to downplay these aristocratic, oligarchic associations because he is more interested in the theme of generational conflict. Although Strepsiades is clearly wealthy and has an aristocratic wife (*Clouds* 61), Aristophanes presents Pheidippides' interest in horses and long hair not so much as a logical extension of his aristocratic birth, but as a source of conflict between father and son. And while much of this conflict is financially-driven, clearly the play as a whole, especially the debate between Just and Unjust Argument that serves as the climax of the play, is about a more general conflict between the older and the younger generation. Pheidippides, like Bdelykleon, is clearly part of this younger rebellious generation whose politics, interest in the sophists, and aesthetic tastes are different from those of their fathers.

It may be objected that the long laconizing hair of Pheidippides and Bdelykleon has nothing to do with ritual. But I think the examples can be justified on two grounds. First, my goal in this section has been to identify a number of different associations that adolescent hair – special locks or hair uncut from childhood – had in the eyes of adult writers, who are our only source for the life of boys and adolescents, and to suggest that this same range of meanings was available to the adolescent himself. Most of the associations I identified (sexual vitality, femininity, historical and heroic styles) were linked directly with ritual; while laconizing was not linked with ritual in any source that I know of, it too is an association that a youth *could* invoke in ritual. Indeed, it is hard to believe that the hair of younger Athenian boys and adolescents during the late fifth or early fourth centuries, hair that was being grown for the river Cephissus, for Heracles, or for Artemis, was not sometimes assimilated to oligarchic Spartan hair, especially the hair of boys and adolescents with older brothers in the cavalry or a father hostile to the radical democracy.

Second, the laconizing hair worn by some Athenian youths appears to have been a temporary hairstyle, judging from the fact that it is associated almost exclusively with the young, and therefore it is probable that the long hair would eventually be cut when the youth was ready to settle down and be a productive adult member of society. And when it *was* finally cut, it would mark a sort of final transition to adulthood, even if the cut hair was not offered to a kourotrophic deity. We might even describe this as a “private ritual.” I don’t think that the presence or absence of cult is ultimately all that important: if we consider it purely from the perspective of the adolescent performer, non-ritual hair-growing and hair-cutting is not very different from ritual hair-growing and hair-cutting, which itself affords the adolescent a good deal of room for improvisation.

The performance embodied in these adolescent hairstyles, ritual and non-ritual alike, meant different things to different people. The hair ritually grown by a Euboean boy might be seen by some as invoking Ionian tradition and by others as assimilating the boy to the Abantes and Kouretes of the heroic age. Likewise, an Athenian boy may have seen his *krôbylos* or *skollus* as an extension of his newfound virility or as a rebellious statement against the democracy, while his grandfather saw it as a reproduction of the historical style of his Ionian ancestors, and the boy’s battalion leader as evidence of the boy’s sissiness. It is precisely the inability of any one person or group to control the meaning of ritual and non-ritual grooming that makes it so useful for social communication.

Notes

- 1 The book, *The Rites of Passage*, was first published in 1909, but did not come to exert much influence on classical studies in England and the United States until the appearance of an English translation in 1960. On Van Gennep and the concept of tribal initiation in general, see the contributions of Graf and Polinskaya in this volume.
- 2 The most brilliant statement of the structural approach in the field of classics remains Vidal-Naquet (1986) 106–28, originally published in 1968 and inspired to a great extent by the work of Lévi-Strauss. Surprisingly few classicists have been influenced by the approach of another important structuralist, the anthropologist Victor Turner. For a critique of Vidal-Naquet’s structural approach, see Leitaο (1995) 136–42 and the contributions of Polinskaya and Dodd in this volume.
- 3 The felicitous phrase is that of Hughes-Freeland and Crain (1998) 2.
- 4 See Morris (1995) 571–2.
- 5 See Schlegel and Barry (1980). On the traces of such a conception in Greek male transition rites, see Leitaο (1995).
- 6 See e.g., Euripides *Bacchae* 494 (for Dionysus); Diphilus frag. 66 Kock (for unnamed god); Pausanias 8.20.3 (for the river Alpheios); Himerius 23.7 (for Dionysus).
- 7 Morris (1995) 571–2; Mitchell (1998).
- 8 So generally Pollux 3.38. The hair-offering in *A.P.* 6.201 was made on the occasion of a first childbirth, which itself might be thought of as a rite of passage.

- 9 We also have a number of grave stelai from the greater Roman empire that mention the ages of children who died before cutting their lock of hair: these range from age 2 to 10. Goette (1989) 209 and Appendix A nos. 10, 11, 11a, 12, 14, 20, 36, 43 and Appendix B no. 3. See also Legras (1993) on Egyptian mummy portraits. It should be observed, however, that these examples are mostly non-Greek and are mostly from the first few centuries CE.
- 10 For the private nature of rites involving children and adolescents, see now Faraone (in this volume) on the Athenian *arkteia*.
- 11 The best discussion of the *koureion* sacrifice remains Cole (1984).
- 12 E.g., boys to the river Cephissus (Pausanias 1.37.3); ephebes in conjunction with a libation to Heracles (Athenaeus 494–95; Hesychius s.v. *oinistêria*; Photius s.v. *oinistêria*).
- 13 Corinth: Pausanias 2.3.6–7. Megara: id. 1.43.4. Troezen: Euripides *Hippolytus* 1423–30.
- 14 See especially Johnston (1999) 203–49.
- 15 See e.g., Homer *Iliad* 23.135–51 (vow made by Peleus, though in a somewhat different context); *I. Str.* 405, 417, 444, 445, 483 (Panamara); *IG* 12.5.173.5 (Paros); cf. *A.P.* 6.198 and 10.19.
- 16 Homer *Iliad* 23. 135–51; Aeschylus *Libation Bearers* 6–7; Diodorus Siculus 4.24.4–6; Pausanias 8.20.3; Himerius 23.7; Philostratus the Elder *Imagines* 1.7.2; Eustathius ad *Iliad* 1.254. Cf. Diphilus frag. 66.6 Kock. The Latin sources have *pasco*: Vergil *Aeneid* 7.391; Censorinus 1.10.
- 17 Frazer (1911–15) 264–87, esp. 283–4; Eitrem (1914) 350–1.
- 18 Burkert (1985) 70.
- 19 See e.g., Olivelle (1998) 32–6, who discusses non-Greek evidence.
- 20 See Leach (1958) for a general statement of the structuralist view, Bremmer (1978) 25, 27–8 for its application to the Greek evidence.
- 21 Cf. the offering Queen Berenice vowed to make when her husband Ptolemy III returned from the Assyrian war. Callimachus frag. 110; Catullus 66.7–14.
- 22 Theophrastus *Characters* 21.3 (Delphi); cf. Theopompus *FGrH* 115 F 248 = Athenaeus 605a–d.
- 23 *P.Oxy* XLIX p. 115 (Egypt).
- 24 The inscription reads *meta tou patros*; cf. the phrase *meta tôn goneôn* of *I. Str.* 1263, in a very similar context, discussed in n. 35 below.
- 25 A papyrus from the Greek community in Oxyrhynchus mentions a hair-cutting ceremony for two brothers to be celebrated in the temple of Thoeris. *P. Oxy.* XII.1484, revised in *P. Oxy.* XLIX p. 115; Legras (1993) 117–18. The evidence that these are brothers is based upon the plural article *tôn*, and the involvement elsewhere of fathers. Whether one accepts the restoration *tôn [buiôn mou]*, more likely in my opinion, or *tôn [adelphôn]*, the boys are still brothers.
- 26 See e.g., *A.P.* 6.164, offered to Poseidon, along with Glaucus, Nereus, Melicertes, and the Samothracian Gods in thanks for being saved at sea. Another hair offering after a shipwreck: Lucian *Pro Merc. Cond.* 1 (no specific god mentioned). Hair cut on board during a storm (again, no specific god mentioned as recipient): Juvenal 12.81; Petronius 104.5.
- 27 E.g., Sommer (1912) 2106; Rouse (1902) 243.
- 28 A photograph of the stele may be found in *IG* 9.2.146; there is a sketch in Daremburg-Saglio s.v. *donarium*, fig. 2543, and s.v. *coma*, fig. 1833.
- 29 See e.g., Bremer (1912) 2124–5; Kourouniotou (1923) passim and figs. 1 and 5; and

- Harrison (1988) 250–3, with the most up-to-date bibliography.
- 30 *IG* 9.2.585; *Arch. Eph.* 1923 p. 137.367; *Arch. Eph.* 1930 p. 102.3.
- 31 *Arch. Eph.* 1923 p. 137.367.
- 32 See e.g., Oppermann (1924) 71; Laumonier (1958) 331.
- 33 See Deschamps and Cousin (1888); Rouse (1902) 243; Sahin (1982–90) vol. I.193.
- 34 See Laumonier (1958) 331 and *I.Str.* 412 = *SEG* 4.347, where the *SEG* editor has supplemented a lone *nu* to read *n[eaniskôn]*, “young men”.
- 35 See Goette (1989). I think Goette, id., 208–9 is wrong to understand *meta tôn goneôn* as meaning that the parents too are dead and this stele aims to preserve their memory. Rather, I think that Epagathos is joining with the parents (who might not have been able to afford such an extravagant memorial) in commemorating the death of their son Threptos. Cf. also *IG* 12.5.173.5 (the mother makes the hair offering on behalf of her son *meta tou patros*, i.e., with the participation of the boy’s father).
- 36 Goette (1989) 206–8.
- 37 LaBarbe (1953).
- 38 *I.Str.* 450, 489, 490, 491, 545; cf. 486–8.
- 39 See e.g., Laumonier (1958) 311, 330.
- 40 See Goette (1989) 212, Appendix A no. 20.
- 41 Laumonier (1958) 256.
- 42 Theopompus *FGrH* 115 F 248 = Athenaeus 605a–d; Theophrastus *Characters* 21.3.
- 43 See Deschamps and Cousin (1888) 481 (but they give no examples of an inscription).
- 44 Deschamps and Cousin (1888) 488 n. 78. Some of the hair inscriptions at Paros and Panamara seem to have been scribbled on the wall of the temple. Paros: Rubensohn (1902) 226–7. Panamara: Laumonier (1958) 329. The inclusion of some unrelated youths in lists of offerings made by brothers (e.g., *I.Str.* 449) might be explained as generosity on the part of a wealthy family on behalf of one of their son’s friends who was unable to pay for the dedicatory stele himself.
- 45 Diodorus 4.24.4–6 (Agyrion, in Sicily); *A.P.* 6.155, 7.482; Lucian *Dea Syria* 60 (Hierapolis); Himerius 23.7 (Prusa, in Bithynia)
- 46 *skollus*: Pamphilus ap. Athen. 494f; Pollux 2.30; Hesych. s.v. *hierôma*, *koruphos*; cf. Dioscorid. *De simp. med.* 2.97.1, Hesychius s.v. *skollus*, *konnophorôn*, *mallos*; Eustathius ad *Odyssey* 1.205–6.; *konnos*: Hesychius s.v. *hierôma*; cf. Lucian *Lexiphanes* 5, Hesychius s.v. *konnos*, *konnophorôn*; *kerôbylos*: Pollux 2.30; cf. Thucydides 1.6.3 with Gomme’s comments ad loc.; *mallos*: Hesychius s.v. *hierôma*; Montserrat (1991); Legras (1993); cf. Hesych. s.v. *mallos*.
- 47 Van Hoorn (1909) 38–51; Harrison (1988).
- 48 Von Gonzenbach (1957); Goette (1989).
- 49 So Goette (1989) 206–8.
- 50 Cf. Goette, id., 207–8.
- 51 See generally Olivelle (1998) 36–7.
- 52 See Hippocrates, *Nat. Puer.* 20.1–3; [Aristotle] *De coloribus* 797b30–798b5; and Onians (1954) 229–33, 530–1.
- 53 Davis (1986) 399–402; Koehl (1986) 100–3.
- 54 See David (1992) 12–16, with further bibliography.
- 55 Plutarch *Moralia* 261e–f. This perfectly matches the gendered hairstyles of Spartan adults: men were permitted to grow their hair long, and they lavished great attention on it (Xenophon, *Lac. Pol.* 11.3; Herodotus 7.208–9; Plutarch, *Lycurgus* 22.1–2); Spartan

- women, meanwhile, were expected to wear their hair short (Aristotle frag. 611 = Heraclides Lembus 373.13 Dilts; Lucian *Fug.* 27; cf. Plutarch *Lycurgus* 15.5, Xenophon of Ephesus 5.1.7) and not wear gold jewelry or other ornamentation of any kind (Heraclides Lembus 373.13 Dilts).
- 56 Pollux 2.30. Boyhood style: Hesychius, Suda, Lex Seg. s.v. *krôbylos*.
- 57 See e.g., Asios of Samos frag. 13; Thucydides 1.6.3; Aristophanes *Wasps* 1266 and scholia ad loc.; Heraclides Ponticus frag. 55 Wehrli = Athenaeus 512c; Nicolaus Damasc. *FGrH* 90 F 62; and Studniczka (1896) generally.
- 58 Bechtel (1917) 601.
- 59 Gow and Page (1965) 538.
- 60 Nicolaus' source is probably the fifth century historian, Xanthus of Lydia.
- 61 His youth is guaranteed by the fact that he becomes the *paidika*, that is, the subordinate partner in a pederastic relationship, of the Lydian tyrant Gyges. The phrase *anêr Smyrnaios*, which Nicolaus uses to describe Magnes, means "a Smyrnaean," not necessarily "an adult man from Smyrna." Cf. LSJ s.v. *anêr* VI.1.
- 62 Photius and Suda, s.v. *krôbylos* make the equation. Asios of Samos frag. 13 and Athenaeus 512c = Heraclides Ponticus frag. 55 Wehrli attach the name *korymbos* to the same Ionian hairstyle which Thucydides calls a *krôbylos*.
- 63 On the Ekdusia, see generally Leitao (1995).
- 64 Athenaeus 512c, for example, refers to the Ionian purple cloaks worn by the Athenians as a mark of *to truphân*, "soft luxury." The language Athenaeus uses to describe them (*balourgê êmpischonto himatia*) is very similar to the way Nicolaus describes Magnes' cloak (*balourgê ampechomenos*). Cf. Thucydides 1.6.3.
- 65 On the problems associated with assuming that rituals lie behind adolescent narratives, see Graf in this volume.
- 66 See Austin (1972); Boardman (1973); Bremmer (1978) 25–8.
- 67 Hom. Il. 2.542; cf. also Plutarch *Theseus* 5.
- 68 Archemachus *FGrH* 424 F 9 = Strabo 10.3.6. See also Pollux 2.28, who calls the Euboean Kouretes *opisthokomoi*.
- 69 For a description of some common Hellenistic and imperial styles, see Goette (1989). It is suggestive, but by no means decisive, that in his extensive discussion of the heroic hairstyles of Theseus and Abantes in *Theseus* 5, Plutarch at no time suggests that these styles served as a model for the practice of later times, including his own.
- 70 Pace Bremmer (1978) 25–8, who sees this as a temporary, liminal style.
- 71 Puech (1976) 13–14.
- 72 See the scholarship cited in Puech (1976) 19–20.
- 73 Wenning and Zenger (1982); see also Kötting (1986).
- 74 One probable exception: at Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 561, the long-haired man is a phylarch, and presumably no longer a youth (he is called an *anêr*). There are also three references to laconizing long hair in which no age is discernible: Aristophanes *Clouds* 1100 and *Birds* 1281–2, and Plato Comicus frag. 124 Kock.
- 75 Cf. Aristophanes *Lysistrata* 561 and *Clouds* 14–16, which associate this hairstyle with horses, although they do not mention the knights explicitly. Cf. also Lysias 16.18, where the young Mantisheos, who is defending his service in the cavalry under the Thirty, urges that one should not "hate a man just because he grows his hair long" (16.18). But see now Craik (1999), who makes a good case against emending *tolmai* to *komai*.
- 76 Aristoph. *Lysistrata*. 1072; Plato Comicus frag. 124 Kock.

STRIDING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

Hermes and Aphrodite as gods of initiation

Nanno Marinatos

Hermes and Aphrodite are not considered a pair in the standard books on Greek mythology. Traditionally Aphrodite is paired with Ares, who is her lover, or with Hephaestus, who is her husband. Yet, there is firm evidence that the two gods enjoyed common worship in several sanctuaries throughout Greece: in Crete, Arcadia, Attica, Samos and southern Italy.¹ Even on the Athenian Acropolis there is a common worship to Aphrodite, Hermes and Eros.² Since there are so many instances of joint cult, the relationship of the two gods cannot be dismissed as a regional peculiarity, and it must be suspected that the two divinities had common features. It is their common function that will be explored here and it will be related to age-grade initiation. However, a short digression on the term 'initiation' is necessary here.

One of the main issues addressed by this volume is the validity of Van Gennep's model for Greek religion. The answer is not simple. On the one hand, Van Gennep's delineation of the tripartite structure of initiation rituals as separation, liminality and reintegration has helped historians of Greek religion to understand the mechanisms of transition from one state to another. On the other hand, each civilization is unique and utilizes its own culture-specific mechanisms and 'codes' to express transition; the phases may be more complex than Van Gennep's tripartite structure. For example, each phase may contain tripartite sub-phases. We shall not pursue this theoretical matter here. Suffice it to say that transition of age groups from one category to the next was a concern of ancient Greek society, and that it is unlikely that there was one *single* rite of passage to adulthood. Rather, we may postulate a *series of passages* from childhood to preadolescence, from preadolescence to adolescence, from adolescence to adulthood (in short: several initiation rites). Festivals would have provided the religious and seasonal contexts for passage whereas sanctuaries would have afforded the physical location. What is more important: the transition into an older age group would have been celebrated in connection

with more than one deity. If Greek society was highly concerned with the growing up of youths (as I believe), then it is not a surprise there are so many gods of initiation in religion: Apollo, Artemis, Hermes, Dionysos, Hera, Aphrodite. All these deities assumed the role of patronage of youths on some occasion or another. In reality, there may have been many ‘initiations’ in the life-time of a male or a female. The education of the Greek city-state (*polis*) is yet to be fully understood. It seems almost certain, however, that the task was realized within the frame of the religion of the *polis*. Competitions (*agônes*) in athletics, music, dance, and choral singing helped define age groups and provided the tests for advancement from one level to the next.³

One final observation: the ancient Greeks had no word for ‘initiation’; it was the Jesuit Lafitau (1670–1740) who first applied the model to ancient religions (see Fritz Graf in this volume).

Hermes and Aphrodite in the sanctuary of Kato Syme on Crete: a forum for puberty rites

We now turn to Hermes and Aphrodite. On Crete the two deities occur several times together within the same inscription. At Dreros and Lato, for example, they are invoked (along with other deities) in connection with oaths and treaties of the Hellenistic period.⁴ One wonders why Hermes and Aphrodite would be relevant to military affairs. The argument that will be developed below is that the function of these deities, since the archaic period, was to oversee the transition of young men to adulthood. For this reason they were appropriate patrons of young soldiers or soldiers to be, and they witnessed their oaths.

Our starting point will be one particular sanctuary: Kato Syme on Crete. It deserves special attention because it was dedicated to Hermes and Aphrodite. It was a large sacred site located on the slope of the Dikte mountain, overlooking the Libyan sea.⁵ It was founded in the Bronze Age and continued an uninterrupted existence into the Roman period. Its popularity throughout the history of ancient Crete is made manifest by the wealth of its finds. The sanctuary was never part of a city, throughout its long history. Rather, it was an ‘extra-urban’ cult site and may well have been a center for the congregation of several communities.⁶ The finds suggest that pilgrims came from far away, from east and central Crete, even from Knossos.⁷ Consequently the sanctuary was a center of activities within a broad region, it had a rich clientele and reached its peak during the archaic Greek period.

The architecture is difficult to disentangle because the stratigraphy is complex and the layers of cult activity continuous. It is worth noting that no ‘temple’ has been found. In the archaic period the salient features were an altar, a hearth and three terraced platforms replete with sacrificial material. All the above testify to sacrifices and banqueting.⁸ Banquets enforce communal bonding and may seal events of some significance.⁹

In summary, the cult activities at Kato Syme involved congregation of various communities at the sanctuary in order to worship, celebrate, and enforce communal ties.¹⁰ As for the gods, graffito and inscriptions testify to the worship of Hermes Kedrites and Aphrodite.¹¹ For the particular qualities of the patron deities we must take a close look at the votives.

The most interesting objects for our purposes consist of bronze figurines and flat bronze plaques. The latter were found in the vicinity of the archaic altar: 'the altar and the hearth were evidently the focal point around which the bronze plaques were deposited', writes the excavator.¹² It is thus certain that they were not affixed to the walls of buildings, perhaps they were hung on trees.¹³ We owe much to the meticulous study of the style and meaning of the figural scenes to the excavator, A. Lebessi, who has made possible the overall assessment of the cult within the sanctuary and who has arrived at important conclusions, some of which will be repeated here.

- The votives with human subjects give information about the social status of the dedicators. Since bronze is not a cheap material and the work of the metal smith is costly, it is almost certain that the dedicators represented the social elite of their community.¹⁴
- The votaries of both the plaques and the figurines are mostly males (there are rare female depictions).¹⁵
- These males can be classified into the following social categories: the warrior/hunter, the symposiast (figurine holding a cup), the musician (flute and lyre player).¹⁶
- The men represent two distinct age groups: beardless youths or bearded adults.¹⁷

The votives mirror the social world of Cretan aristocrats in the archaic period: they hunt, feast, and play music. The figurines that hold a lyre or a flute may reflect the role of music and dance in Dorian education.¹⁸

Let us now turn to hunting activities that are especially well represented among the votive plaques of the sanctuary of Hermes and Aphrodite at Kato Syme. The role of hunting in connection with the training of youths in ancient Greece is well known and finds confirmation in iconography as well as myth.¹⁹ Yet the plaques tell a more complicated story than mere hunting.²⁰ Wild animals are captured alive and wrestled (Fig. 7.1). Sometimes they are led by force to the sanctuary.²¹ Alternatively they are bound and carried on the shoulders of men; they may be alive or dead (Fig. 7.2).²² In some cases the beast is already dismembered, so we must assume that the meat is being carried to the altar or the place of the feast.²³ Thus, shooting the animals was not the only or even the primary subject of the plaques. Wrestling with the animal is a common theme. Important also is the sacrifice and the feast. All this is relevant to the initiation scenario. Animal wrestling may be interpreted plausibly as a test of strength. As we shall see further on, Hermes also performs a similar task of wrestling the



Figure 7.1 Youth wrestling a goat. (After Lebessi (1985) pl. 35, no. A12)

cattle that he has stolen from Apollo. Let us look at one example more specifically. On one plaque a crouching young man carries a huge goat on his shoulders (Fig. 7.3). His posture suggests that he is burdened by the animal.²⁴ Why is the carrying of the animal important to depict? We may turn to a later ritual for an explanation when the Athenian ephebes lifted bulls on their shoulders before sacrifice.²⁵ This was a test of physical prowess. There is literary testimony as well. Theseus, upon his return from Crete to Athens lifted the oxen off his cart and threw them up in the air 'higher than the roof of the temple', says Pausanias (1.19.1). Note that, in the narrative, Theseus' act proves to the bystanders that he is a man.²⁶ In

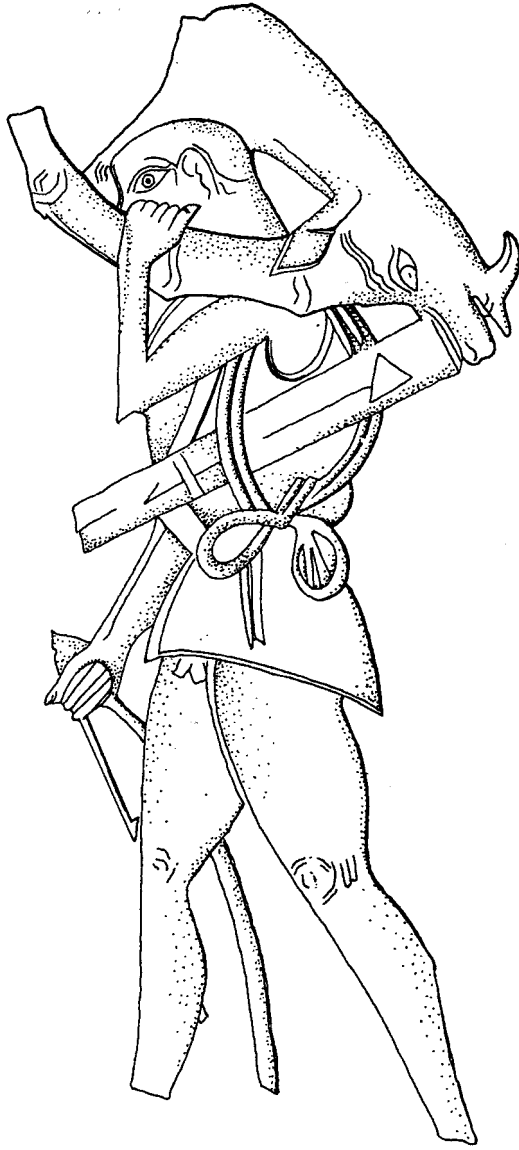


Figure 7.2 Youth carrying a dead goat on his shoulders. (After Lebessi (1985) pl. 46, no. Γ8)

short, the plaques from Kato Syme reflect a process that ranges from the capture of the animal to its defeat, to its ultimate sacrifice.

Let us now focus on the relationship of bearded men to beardless youths. One plaque depicts a pair of male figures facing each other (Fig. 7.4). To the right, a bearded man holds a bow, but no animal, whereas the youth carries a bound goat



Figure 7.3 Young man lifting a bound animal on his shoulders (After Lebessi (1985) pl. 40, no. Γ7)

on his shoulders.²⁷ The older figure touches the elbow of the young man in affection or praise. He is probably his tutor. Lebessi has interpreted this scene as depicting the homosexual relationship of lover and beloved.²⁸ The excavator points out, that institutionalized homosexuality was part of the Dorian *agôgê*, attested on Crete by later authors. The penis, visible under the tunic of the youth may be a sign of social significance indicating youthful manhood, as Lebessi suggests.²⁹

It is hard to escape the conclusion of the excavator that the sanctuary was used for rites of maturation and that it provided a place for the activities of youths who were trained in the wilderness.³⁰ In this case, Van Gennep's period of separation seems to apply well. It is not insignificant that there is a Greek word for liminal space: '*eschatia*'. The young men were presumably trained to be hunters and to capture wild animals. It may be suspected that they also patrolled the borders of their city-state, but this is an issue that deserves exploration in itself.³¹



Figure 7.4 Bearded man and beardless youth in affectionate interaction. (After Lebessi (1985) pl. 41, no. Γ5)

In summary, the votive plaques suggest that many activities of the young men at the sanctuary of Kato Syme on Crete were related to initiation. The sanctuary provided a formal forum for ceremonies of age transition that ended in feasting, although other types of rituals cannot be excluded.

Hermes at Kato Syme and beyond

It was necessary to discuss the social frame of the maturation rituals conducted at Kato Syme before we turn to Hermes. That he was a patron deity of the sanctuary already in the orientalizing and mature archaic periods is certain because the god is depicted on plaques of the archaic period. A youthful Hermes can be identified on one plaque. We know he is a god here, rather than an ordinary mortal because he holds a small scepter. (Fig. 7.5).³² He is also depicted as a bearded adult, however. He is a hunter with a bow with winged sandals and a wreath on his head (Fig. 7.6).³³ What is of importance



Figure 7.5 Adolescent Hermes. Metal blade from Kato Syme. (After Lebessi (1985) pl. 52)



Figure 7.6 Bearded Hermes. (After Lebessi (1985) pl. 32, A58)

for the initiation scenario is that he has two guises: that of a youth and that of an adult.³⁴ What does his double guise signify?³⁵ I shall be arguing that the double appearance of Hermes reveals his mediating function between adolescence and mature adulthood and that his role was to be a 'guide' across boundaries.³⁶ But we must also look beyond Kato Syme. One way to understand the Greek god is through his images. And if we look at those, the same pattern is revealed as on the plaques from Kato Syme: Hermes has a double guise as an unbearded youth and a bearded mature man.

Let us start with a seventh-century BCE Corinthian aryballos (Fig. 7.7a).³⁷ A young man stands on the branches of a lotus plant, flanked by two sphinxes. He wears an animal hide over his tunic and holds a caduceus, a magical snake wand. The caduceus identifies him as Hermes. The animal hide shows that the god belongs to the wilderness (the same type of animal skin is



Figure 7.7a Unbearded Hermes on a Corinthian Aryballos. (After Seibert (1990) no. 237)



Figure 7.7b Bearded Hermes on a Corinthian Aryballos. (After Seibert (1990) no. 230)

worn by Artemis, Maenads, Amazons and even Dionysus).³⁸ The hide indicates the as yet 'untamed' status of the youth, alternatively, it identifies him as a hunter.³⁹ And what about the lotus plant? Does it show that Hermes is a vegetation god? I think not. The prototype for this iconography is almost certainly inspired by the Egyptian formula of the young sun god born from a lotus plant. This type of image was spread in the Levant in the Iron Age and is frequently represented in amulet seals of Phoenician–Israelite provenance in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE.⁴⁰ The same arrangement, namely Hermes between two sphinxes, appears on another Corinthian aryballos of the same period.⁴¹ This time, however, the god has a beard (Fig. 7.7b). Thus, the two figures of Hermes, dating to the same period and expressing the same iconographical formula, show the dual nature of the god as a youth and a mature man.

The Amasis Painter (c. 640 BCE) has furnished us with another youthful Hermes (Fig. 7.8). Two gods are present, a beardless Hermes and a bearded Dionysos.⁴² The latter holds a cup and receives a beardless young man who greets him. The youth is followed by Hermes who is recognizable by his winged sandals and staff. Hermes' role as the youth's companion is clear on this vase; we can further deduce that the god introduces him to the Dionysiac adult world of the symposium.⁴³ A satyr, standing in front of Dionysos, is a reminder that the realm of this god involves sexuality as well. To the far left is a man with a long robe who may be a tutor or some other adult figure.

Hermes and Dionysos are not strangers to each other in mythical narrative and cult.⁴⁴ Both oversee adolescents as they cross the boundary to maturity. The relationship of Dionysos to ephebes in vase imagery has been demonstrated recently by C. Isler-Kerenyi; she has shown that this god is a



Figure 7.8 Adolescent Hermes on black figure vases by the Amasis painter. (After Seibert (1990) no. 709 and Gaspari (1986) no. 806)

patron of youths engaged in athletics or hunting.⁴⁵ Nor is homosexual courtship lacking from Dionysiac imagery: a bearded man courts a beardless ephebe on a vase by the 'Affecter' painter.⁴⁶ The association of Hermes and Dionysos cannot be accidental; in fact they tread on common ground since they both oversee age transition and metamorphosis from adolescence to adulthood.

Let us finally note that the youthful Hermes survives the archaic period. In later times he is the patron of the *gymnasia*; as such he is attested also on votives of classical times from Kato Syme.⁴⁷

The Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* dates to the late sixth century BCE and belongs to the chronological horizon of the votives from Kato Syme. In this song the god is presented as a baby but he grows up fast and his actions suggest that he has reached adolescence within the time span of the narrative although this is never actually stated (see also S. Iles Johnston in this volume).⁴⁸ The infant Hermes accomplishes extraordinary feats. He steals cattle that may be plausibly interpreted as a trial of cunning, stealth, and skill. But he also learns how to sacrifice and there he accomplishes a feat almost beyond his strength. He drags two cattle out of the herd and throws them on their backs, turning and rolling them. Then he stabs them (*Hymn Herm.* 115–20). The descriptions invoke the feats on the plaques from Kato Syme where youths wrestle wild goats (Fig. 7.1).

As for Hermes' theft of cattle, stealth is a skill that youths had to learn as Vidal-Naquet has demonstrated.⁴⁹ By deceiving Apollo, Hermes proves his worth to his older brother. At the end of the poem, Hermes and Apollo are reconciled as the young Hermes gives Apollo the lyre. The lyre cannot be dissociated from the paean, the dance and song that male youths sang in honor of Apollo and which belongs to the sphere of maturation rites.⁵⁰ The lyre player is attested also at Kato Syme, as we have seen above.

The Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* may be pan-Hellenic, according to Clay, so that it provides an official version of what it means to grow up.⁵¹

So far I have stressed the two guises of Hermes as a pre-adult and adult. But his overall function has not been addressed yet. Was he primarily a child god, as in the *Hymn*? A messenger? A fertility and pastoral god?⁵² Is there any point in looking for a general function of Hermes, a *pan-Hellenic* identity? I think yes.

The name of the god derives from *berma*, "a pile of stones". It has been sometimes interpreted as a sign of his primeval nature.⁵³ Stone worship is said to be a sign of a primitive mentality betraying 'animism'. Alternatively, according to Simon, the key to the nature of Hermes is the stone heap that marked graves.⁵⁴ However, Burkert proposed another hypothesis regarding the *berma*: the heap of stones represents elementary *boundaries* between fields or territories.⁵⁵ I suspect that the unifying aspect of *all the sides of Hermes in the archaic period is the idea of boundary-crossing* in its ritualized form, which entails both territorial and symbolic transitions.⁵⁶ An important aspect of crossing boundaries is age transition, from infancy, to preadolescence, to adolescence,

to mature manhood. The further crossings of Hermes into unusual realms are well known and need no extensive discussion here. Suffice to mention how he appears on vase paintings. As *chthonios*, he brings souls to the underworld. At the same time he does the reverse as he leads up Persephone and Heracles from Hades.⁵⁷ He crosses the boundaries that divide earth from heaven as he leads Heracles to Olympus.⁵⁸ Even on earth he helps mortals cross dangerous areas: he takes Priam into Achilles' presence (*Iliad* 24, 354–467), he enables Perseus to escape Medusa. In general, he helps with passage through dangerous domains.⁵⁹ The ancient Greeks obviously thought of Hermes as a guide through both territorial and symbolic markers. This digression on the nature of the god was necessary in order to understand why he came to be considered a god appropriate to maturation rites in addition to his other functions. Growing up is a special form of crossing boundaries.

Hermes and Aphrodite: the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*

We now turn to Aphrodite. In the Homeric *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the goddess seduces the young prince Anchises.⁶⁰ The goddess is portrayed as both irresistibly beautiful and powerful; her ability to induce desire affects both men and beasts, yoking them to her power (*Hymn Aphr.* 69–72). Even Zeus has fallen victim to Aphrodite. However, in this poem, Zeus takes his revenge. He makes her fall into her own trap and she succumbs to irresistible sexual desire for the mortal Anchises. The latter is a young shepherd living in the mountains. He may thus be regarded as the mythological counterpart of youths who live on the mountains such as the youths of Kato Syme. Like them, Anchises is also a hunter. We know this because he makes his bed by piling up animal hides of bears and lions that he has killed in the mountains (*Hymn Aphr.* 159–60). Anchises' sojourn in the mountains can be construed as the 'liminal period' during which young men prepare for their adult roles. Whether we accept Van Gennep's model or a variation of it, it seems that the Greek *polis* demanded (in myth at least) that its young men be acquainted with the wilderness and that they meet the rough challenges of nature.⁶¹

To return to the *Hymn*: Aphrodite meets Anchises and seduces him. The goddess, however, conceals her divine identity so as not to scare her mortal lover away. She pretends to be a virgin who will be herself initiated into sexuality. And how did she get to the mountains? She claims that a god brought her and this god is none other than Hermes who supposedly snatched her away from the chorus of Artemis and led her to the young man (*Hymn Aphr.* 116–20). Here the role of Hermes as a mediator becomes clear: he leads Aphrodite from maidenhood to womanhood. Anchises is overwhelmed by desire and makes passionate love to the disguised goddess. After this, Aphrodite discloses her true identity assuring him that she will bear his son and all ends well.



Figure 7.9 Goddess opening her robe. Old Syrian Seal. (After Winter (1983) Fig. 269)

The *Hymn* reveals two important sides of the gods under discussion. Hermes is a mediator between sexual partners whereas Aphrodite is the initiatrix of the male hero into sexuality. This is a Near Eastern motif, attested already in the *Gilgamesh* epic where Enkidu (who is younger than Gilgamesh) grows up and leaves the wilderness *only after* he has had sex with a harlot. The goddess who takes sexual initiative is attested iconographically on Syrian seals already in the second millennium BCE. (Fig. 7.9).⁶² On these seals, the goddess pulls her skirt open exposing her pubic triangle. Often, she does this in front of a male partner, ruler or god.⁶³ Her interaction with this partner implies an open invitation to sex. Let us now look at the possible role of Aphrodite at Kato Syme.

Aphrodite at Kato Syme: is there iconographical evidence?

We know that the goddess was worshipped at Kato Syme but it is doubtful that she is represented on any of the votive plaques or figurines.⁶⁴ I believe that the iconographical evidence for the goddess is indirect only. We shall turn our attention to a few mould-produced clay plaques with a naked female as their subject.⁶⁵ In one case, the woman pulls her skirt open revealing her pubic triangle (Fig. 7.10). This type of votive is not unique to Kato Syme or indeed even to Crete. Similar votives are attested at other sites on Crete, and the Greek mainland.⁶⁶ The iconography came to Greece from Syria, as we have seen above (cf. Fig. 7.9).⁶⁷ The naked female is often identified as Ishtar/Astarte, but I do not believe that it is necessary to equate her with one particular goddess, be it Aphrodite or Ishtar. As far as the plaque of Fig. 7.9 goes, I suggest that the posture is revealing. The exposition of the genitals is an invitation to sex. It reflects the world of Aphrodite, a world of sexuality, regardless of how the Greeks named the female figure on the plaque.⁶⁸ (There may have been minor deities of sexuality with local names and their function may have been similar to that of Aphrodite.) One more point. If sexual display is an invitation to sex it is *directed towards men and not women* (see also the Old Syrian seal of Fig. 7.9 and note that the goddess is



Figure 7.10 Goddess (?) opening her robe. Clay plaque from Kato Syme. (After Lebessi, *Praktika* (1972) pl. 190c)

facing a male god). The plaques with provocative naked females reflect a male clientele at Kato Syme, which is what Lebessi has argued on other grounds. Further, they mirror the role of Aphrodite as the seductress of Anchises in the *Hymn* discussed above. A further thought: Aphrodite becomes the patroness of young men whom she initiates into manhood. A scenario emerges: the votives may well have been dedicated by men upon completion of a phase of their *agôgê*. They are a declaration of the *act of heterosexual initiation*, as it were. Such an interpretation is compatible with the epithet of Aphrodite Skotia (“the dark one”) who has been connected on other grounds with the initiation of young men on Crete.⁶⁹ ‘Dark Aphrodite’ may be interpreted as the goddess who operates at night. Furthermore, the role of Aphrodite as a patroness of the ephebe Theseus becomes comprehensible if the goddess is an *initiatrice*.⁷⁰ Conversely, Hippolytus is a failed ephebe because he rejects Aphrodite.⁷¹ Yet, Hippolytus and Aphrodite are worshipped together in Troezen and Athens (Paus.1.22.1; 2.13.1); in death and in cult Aphrodite ultimately becomes the young hero’s patron goddess.

The votives and the cult of Hermes and Aphrodite at Locri

The argument so far has been that Hermes and Aphrodite were both involved in initiation. Now we shall look at them as a couple; in this capacity they occur on another set of votive tablets found in a sanctuary at Locri, in southern Italy.⁷² The plaques date to the early classical period, they are later than the votives from Kato Syme, which date from the seventh to the early fifth centuries BCE. The corpus has not been published as a whole, and general conclusions about the cult that they mirror are premature. Although there is controversy about whether the cult was dedicated to Persephone, Aphrodite or both, most scholars agree that marriage was the general subject of the votives.⁷³ We shall focus here only on the imagery of Aphrodite and Hermes and their meaning as a couple.

One type of scene represents Hermes and Aphrodite as statues standing inside a temple (Fig. 7.11). Hermes can be identified as such because of his winged sandals and hat and Aphrodite because of the flower she holds in her right hand.⁷⁴ In front of the temple stand two worshippers: a maiden and a beardless young man have come to ask the blessings of the two gods. But why Hermes and Aphrodite and not Zeus and Hera or some other divine and legitimately married couple? The answer may be revealed by an iconographical detail: in front of the temple we see an altar decorated with a satyr mounting a fawn.⁷⁵ The altar scene represents bestiality and is an explicit reference to raw, indeed crude, sexuality.⁷⁶ The uninhibited representation of the sexual act is reminiscent of vases where satyrs and maenads engage in sexual intercourse under the auspices of Dionysos. C. Isler-Kerenyi has shown that these types of scene are mythical articulations of primeval but socially recognized forces.⁷⁷ We may remember that in the *Hymn to Aphrodite*, the goddess is described as a Mistress of Animals who subdues beasts through the force of desire (lines 69–72). The picture on the altar evokes the description in the *Hymn* and shows that the worship of Hermes and Aphrodite on the votive is related to sexual matters, rather than marriage.⁷⁸

Another scene shows the two gods facing each other. They are obviously lovers because Aphrodite offers a flower to Hermes whereas a cupid hovers close to Aphrodite.⁷⁹ On a third scene, the two gods elope on a chariot. Aphrodite is already on the vehicle which is pulled by cupids. The latter are holding a perfume vessel (alabastron); in front of them is a dove, the lovebird of Aphrodite. Hermes is about to mount the vehicle and the goddess turns back to look at him (Fig. 7.12).⁸⁰ The cupids leave no doubt as to her willingness. The two gods are lovers, as the cupids suggest, while the alabastron and the dove intensify the erotic atmosphere.⁸¹

The question is who dedicated these three iconographical types of votive plaque with Hermes and Aphrodite and why? Although marriage was the general theme of most of the votives, I think that sexual union (independently of marriage) was a concern in its own right. It must be stressed that Hermes



Figure 7.11 Hermes and Aphrodite worshipped by a young couple on votive plaque from Locri. (After Prückner (1968) Fig. 1)

and Aphrodite are *not* the prototype of the married couple but rather embody “eloping lovers”. The copulation scene on the altar of Fig. 7.11 leaves no doubt about the importance of sexuality. Of course sex is related to the general theme of marriage, yet the special emphasis it receives on the plaques from Locri may well signal passage to the next stage of a young man’s or a maiden’s life.

Conclusions

Hermes and Aphrodite have been shown here to be patrons of youths singly or as a couple. We have looked at very diverse material, images as well as texts,

and they give different but complementary messages about Hermes and Aphrodite. The conclusions that may be drawn from the material will be reviewed briefly.

(i) In archaic times Hermes can be a baby (*Hymn to Hermes*), a youth (Figs. 7.5, 7.7a, 7.8) and an adult (Fig. 7.6). This reflects the transformation of a person during his life cycle. From the classical period onwards the youthful appearance takes over, yet we must not ignore the fact that the young Hermes is already present in archaic times.⁸²

(ii) Hermes is shown as a hunter at Kato Syme (Fig. 7.6). He represents the hunting activities that are connected with maturation rites at this sanctuary. His relationship with bovines and the wild is demonstrated also in the *Hymn to Hermes*. The *Hymn* is thus compatible with the visual evidence from Kato Syme and supplements it.

(iii) Hermes is a leader across boundaries in general and age boundaries in particular. This explains his name as derived from *herma*, meaning a pile of (boundary) stones. In this chapter, I have emphasized his role as a god of maturation rites. Since sexuality is one of the criteria for passage, Hermes, as a god of maturation, is also a sexual mediator (*Hym to Aphrodite*) or pursuer of maidens.⁸³ Nowhere is this role clearer than in the mythical biography of the Kekropids where he is a lover of Erse or Pandrosos.⁸⁴ His role as a pursuer of maidens seems to me particularly relevant for understanding his connection to Aphrodite.

(iv) Aphrodite's sexual initiative has been discussed here in connection with two very different types of evidence. We have looked at a votive plaque from Kato Syme where a female figure displays her nudity in a provocative way (Fig. 7.10). In the *Hymn to Aphrodite* the goddess seduces Anchises. The two types of material supplement and confirm each other since they reveal the role of Aphrodite as initiating men to sexuality. As noted above, the naked woman on the plaque may not be showing Aphrodite herself. Rather, the invitation to the sexual act may be construed as a statement of the completion of sexual initiation.

(v) Hermes and Aphrodite appear sometimes as a couple (Figs. 7.11 and 7.12). The association is meaningful because the gods have similar functions under circumstances. When they are a couple, they are illicit lovers and not legitimate spouses; this means that they are patrons of sexuality rather than marriage. If Hermes and Aphrodite are connected with the crossing of age boundaries, they protect young men as they become adults. This explains why they are invoked in connection with oaths and treaties.

(vi) Van Gennep's model, although helpful, needs to be reviewed in the case of Greek religion. At any rate, it is not *one* rite of passage that we find in the iconographical and textual evidence but a rather a whole *series of diverse passages* through different spheres. Hunting and initiation into sexuality have been discussed here but athletics and choral performances are equally relevant.



Figure 7.12 Hermes and Aphrodite elope on votive plaque from Locri. (After Prückner (1968) pl. 2)

The age grade system and the *agôgê* (as far as we understand it) may prove to be the more helpful models for the understanding of maturation rituals.

Notes

- 1 Zanker (1965) 89 with n. 389, reviews the evidence of the joint cult of Aphrodite and Hermes on the Acropolis, perhaps reflected also on the Parthenon frieze. Arcadia: Paus. 6.26.5.
- 2 Pirenne-Delforge (1994) 46.
- 3 Jeanmaire (1939); Brelich (1961a); Calame (1997); Bremmer (1980), 279–98; Brulé (1987); Padilla (1999); Waldner (2000). Note that, in her analysis of the votives from Kato Syme, Lebessi (1985) 189 talks of *successive* stages of an age grade system.
- 4 At Dreros for example: Guarducci (1967) *ad loc*; Willets (1962) 288. Discussion in Chaniotis (1996) 68ff.
- 5 Description of the site by Lebessi (1981); eadem (1985) 17–20; eadem (2000) 175. The

- size is estimated at about 17 stremmata of which only a very small part is excavated.
- 6 Theoretical discussion of ‘extra-urban sanctuary’ in de Polignac (1995); specific information about Cretan sanctuaries in Chaniotis (2001).
 - 7 Lebessi, *Archaeologike Ephemeris* (1981) 1–24; eadem 2000, 175; Chaniotis (2001) 319–28: “Am Kult waren Bürger mehrerer gemeinschaften beteiligt”. (326).
 - 8 There are successive reports by A. Lebessi in *Praktika tes Archaeologikes Hetaireias and Ergon tes Archaeologikes Hetaireias* (1972–1983). Synthesis in Lebessi (1981); critical evaluation in Bergquist (1988) 21–34.
 - 9 The bibliography on the symposium is substantial. Here I cite only the fundamental hypothesis of Burkert (1996) 129ff.
 - 10 De Polignac (1995), 60ff; Chaniotis (2001) 322–7.
 - 11 Lebessi (1985) 73 with n. 83; eadem (1981) 5, pl. 1b; eadem (2000) 176.
 - 12 Lebessi (1985) 221.
 - 13 Lebessi (1985) 20, 69–77; eadem (2000) 180.
 - 14 Lebessi (1985) 188–98.
 - 15 Lebessi (1981) 1–24.
 - 16 Lebessi (1989) 55–61, pls. 1–2.
 - 17 Lebessi (1985); eadem (forthcoming) ch. VII.
 - 18 Lebessi (forthcoming) cites Strabo 10.482–3. Pettersson (1992) 88 cites evidence that dancing in the heat of the summer was a test of endurance.
 - 19 Burkert (1979) 118–22; Vidal-Naquet (1986) 106–28; Lebessi (1996) 149; recently: Mitchell-Boyask (1999) 42ff. For the iconography of hunter ephebes as companions of older men see Schnapp in Berard *et al.* (1989) figs. 100–14. Isler-Kerenyi (2001) demonstrates the connection of Dionysus with hunter ephebes, 131, fig. 74.
 - 20 Lebessi (2000) 174–83 compares the iconography of the plaques with similar Egyptian representations and finds that, although the prototypes are probably Egyptian, the customs reflected on the plaques are purely Greek.
 - 21 Lebessi (1985) 121–6, pl. 37, no. A36; eadem (2000) 183, fig. 19, cat. 402.
 - 22 Lebessi (1985) 121–45.
 - 23 Lebessi (1985) 126ff.; eadem (2000) 179.
 - 24 Lebessi (1985) 54. This scene differs from similar ones where the animal is carried up hill. Lebessi also notes the differentiation and speaks of the effort of the man to rise.
 - 25 Lebessi (1985) 84, 125. The ephebes lifted the bulls during the festival of Proerosia: Pelekidis (1962) 224ff. Visual evidence on a vase in Viterbo museum: Durand and Schnapp in Berard *et al.* (1989) 59, fig. 83. Note also the word *hyper-boo* (“lifters of bulls”): *Inscr Cret* I. xix. 1, 23; III. iii. 4, 43.
 - 26 That this is an initiation scenario has been discussed by Graf (1979) 1–22 and Waldner (2000) 190.
 - 27 Lebessi (1985) 52–3; pl. 41, no. 5; eadem (2000) 177, fig. 3.
 - 28 Lebessi (1985) 189ff.
 - 29 Lebessi (1985) 195; eadem (forthcoming), ch. 8; on male nudity and coming of age the Ekdysia festival may give some testimony. See Leitao (1995) 130–63; Waldner (2000) 236–42.
 - 30 Lebessi (1985) 188–98. A centaur figurine was found in the sanctuary which Lebessi (1996) 149 interprets in connection with rites of maturation.
 - 31 Chaniotis (2001) 21–39.
 - 32 Convincing argumentation for the identification of the figure as Hermes in Lebessi

- (1985) 22, 156–8.
- 33 Discussion of the nature of the god in Lebessi (1985) 112–16. Note that she interprets the branches on his hair as growing. In her view he is a vegetation deity.
- 34 Without beard: Lebessi (1985) 155ff; pl. 1, no. A1; pl. 2, no. A2; pl. 52, nos. A2 and A60. With beard: *ibid.* 44, pl. 34, A58. On the overall function of Hermes: *ibid.* 163–87.
- 35 I do not believe that the beardless guise of Hermes points to a pre-Greek fertility deity or a god of vegetation as Lebessi argues extensively (1985) 137, 163ff; eadem (2000) 176. Lebessi bases her hypothesis on the idea that there was a pre-Greek vegetation deity for whom there is very little evidence indeed. But, as Burkert (1979) 99–101 notes, the model of a vegetation god was invented in the nineteenth century and needs to be revised. It is true that Hermes’ epithet Kedrites of Kato Syme implies a connection with a tree, but many Greek sanctuaries included sacred trees and yet their patron god was not necessarily a vegetation deity. See Burkert (1985) 28, 85.
- 36 Burkert (1985) 158.
- 37 Siebert (1990) 237.
- 38 Maenads with animal hides are equivalent to satyrs according to Isler-Kerenyi (2001) 125, fig. 63.
- 39 Isler-Kerenyi (2001) 113ff.
- 40 Keel and Uehlinger (1995) 282–3, figs. 240–1c. This image occurs also on an ivory: Weiss (1985) 357, pl. 176.
- 41 Siebert (1990) 230.
- 42 Gasparri (1986) 806.
- 43 Siebert (1990) 709 and 308; Gasparri (1986) 806. See also Schnapp, in Berard *et al.* (1989) fig. 106; Isler-Kerenyi (2001) 131, fig. 74 with bibliography.
- 44 Marcade (1952); iconographical evidence is plentiful: Siebert (1990) 560a, b; 651c.
- 45 Marcade (1952); Lebessi (1985) 169–70; Isler-Kerenyi (2001) 135 and fig. 74: ‘Prima ancora della caccia apparteneva alla fasa efèbica l’attività atletica’.
- 46 Isler-Kerenyi (2001) 125, fig. 82.
- 47 Lebessi (1985) 182–3.
- 48 Gods with babyhood, who themselves carry babies when they are adults, may plausibly be interpreted as gods of age transition: I owe this insight to Aileen Ajootian (personal communication).
- 49 Vidal-Naquet (1986) 106–28.
- 50 Jeanmaire (1939) 429ff; Pettersson (1992) 19ff; Bremmer (1990) 135–48 at 138. The close connection of dance and initiation has been recently argued by Graf (1999) 83–96.
- 51 Clay (1989) 152–201.
- 52 Guthrie (1950) 88 considers Dionysus an ancient god of the countryside.
- 53 Willets (1962) speaks of a “. . . spirit immanent in stones set up as cairns . . . having links with Minoan pillar cult . . .”; cf. also Lebessi (1985) 173f; 195.
- 54 Simon (1969) 300 with n. 12.
- 55 Burkert (1985) 157ff.
- 56 Hermes incorporates boundaries in his *persona*, stressing rather than obfuscating them: Burkert (1979) 39–41. This interpretation differs from that of Kahn (1978), who understands Hermes as blurring boundaries and distinctions. See also Clay (1989) 98: “[He is] . . . characterized by penetration and passage between boundaries and limits.”
- 57 Siebert (1990) 515–26 etc.
- 58 Siebert (1990) 297.

- 59 Crossing real and symbolic boundaries is the function of Hermes in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. As a messenger he crosses the boundaries between the Olympian divine world and that of mortals, but he also helps humans cross difficult borders within the human world. For example, he helps Odysseus and Priam in difficult situations.
- 60 Clay (1989) 152–201.
- 61 Jeanmaire (1939) 540ff; Vidal-Naquet (1986) 106–28; see also the table in Pettersson (1992) 89; de Polignac (1995) 60ff. Discussion of the Spartan *agôgê* in Kennel (1995).
- 62 Winter (1983) 135ff and esp. 284–96.
- 63 Other variants show the naked goddess in front of a seated god, perhaps even a ruler. See Winter (1983) 170, fig. 132.
- 64 For the epigraphical evidence of the cult of Aphrodite and a review of the archaeological evidence at the site: Lebesi (1981) 1–24.
- 65 There are five examples: A. Lebesi, *Praktika Archaeologikes Hetaireias* (1972) 200–1, pl. 190; eadem, *Athens Annals of Archaeology* 6 (1973) 112. Catalogue and discussion in Böhm (1990) 78, 89, 120f, and 167.
- 66 Böhm (1990) 83–113; Marinatos (2000) 1–31.
- 67 Winter (1983); Böhm (1990); Marinatos (2000) 1–31.
- 68 See Pirenne-Delforge (1994) for an overview of the cult of Aphrodite.
- 69 Willets (1962) 285f. More recently Leitao (1995) 130–63; Waldner (2000) 228–9.
- 70 Waldner (2000) 201–21. Important also is the assimilation of Aphrodite to Ariadne. The role of *initiatrice* is ascribed also to Medea by Graf (1997) 21–43.
- 71 Burkert (1979) 111ff; Mitchell-Boyask (1999) 43–66.
- 72 Zancani Montuoro (1950) 204–54; eadem (1954) 79–86; Prückner (1968) 1–14.
- 73 Sourvinou-Inwood (1978) 147–88.
- 74 Prückner (1968) 17ff, identifies the pair as Hermes and Aphrodite disagreeing with Zancani Montuoro who thinks they are Hades and Persephone. Prückner (1968) 27–30 also discusses the location of the temple at Locri. The temple, however, may be an iconographical fiction signifying the joined cult of Hermes and Aphrodite.
- 75 The fawn is a metaphor for women in vase painting. On a Corinthian vase a young girl is named *nebrys* (fawn). See Amyx (1988) v. III, pl. 83.1a; Dowden (1989) 41; Klinger (1999).
- 76 Sourvinou-Inwood (1978) 178 interprets the sexuality on the altar as a cosmic principle.
- 77 Isler-Kerenyi (2001) 39–65.
- 78 For this reason *eros* is depicted between the couple on one of the relief types: Prückner (1968) 16ff, pl. I.1. For the sexual initiation of maidens: Waldner (2000) 55–60.
- 79 Prückner (1968) 16, pl. I.1. On Aphrodite and sexual initiation: Pirenne-Delforge (1994) 202.
- 80 Prückner (1968) Type 4, pl. 2, 23ff.
- 81 Prückner (1968) 23–5, correctly suggests that Hermes is the lover of Aphrodite. He disagrees with Zancani Montuoro (1950) 294 who relates the scene to the marriage of Hades and Persephone.
- 82 Zanker (1965); Lebesi (1985) 182ff.
- 83 Zanker (1965) 84ff; iconographical evidence in Siebert (1990). Hermes also pursues young men such as Ganymede: Siebert (1990) 866.
- 84 In the written tradition it is mostly Herse who is pursued by Hermes, although sometimes it is Pandrosos. Visual evidence most recently reviewed in Shapiro (1996) 39–48. For literary testimonia: Powell (1906) 8–9.

Part V

INITIATION AND
NARRATIVE PATTERNS

“INITIATION” IN MYTH, “INITIATION” IN PRACTICE

The Homeric *Hymn to Hermes* and its
performative context¹

Sarah Iles Johnston

One of the conclusions shared by the authors in this volume is that, with the exception of Crete and possibly Sparta, we have no evidence from historical Greece for adolescent initiation rituals in the strict sense of that term – that is, there were no rituals in which all members of an age class had to participate in order to become adults. Because, moreover, the imaginative recreation of such initiations for the *prehistorical* period of Greece rests upon fragmentary evidence, precariously supplemented by paradigms borrowed from other cultures, it seems that students of ancient Greece must cease, however regretfully, their pursuit of this chimaerical creature.

This does not mean, however, that we must turn away from a closely related and equally attractive beast, the initiatory *theme* as manifested in Greek mythic narratives. Here, we have plenty of potential evidence to consider: Greek myth frequently exhibits themes that are associated with initiation in other cultures and that we are therefore tempted to assume have an initiatory significance in Greek myth as well. We also have plenty of questions to ask. How and why did these themes develop in Greece? How do they differ from similar narratives in other cultures and what do those differences signify? And – most pressingly, given both the point of the previous paragraph and the fact that myth in archaic and classical Greece was transmitted predominantly through performance on public occasions – with what festivals or other social institutions were these apparently initiatory myths associated? Or to put it more succinctly: if there were no initiation rituals for which initiatory myths could serve as *aitia* in historical Greece, then when and why were they recited?

Of course, an easy answer would be to say that the myths developed during some prehistorical period, when there still were initiation rituals in Greece, and lingered on: this has been the approach of Walter Burkert, Pierre Vidal-Naquet

and Ken Dowden, for example. Not only does this rest on precarious assumptions, as I already mentioned, but as David Brooks Dodd points out in this volume, it also embroils scholars in circular logic: they reconstruct the erstwhile rituals from hints they find in the myths and then use the rituals to support their view that the myths are initiatory. (Running somewhere around the periphery of this circle are *comparanda* from other cultures – sometimes geographically distant cultures – whose relationship to the circle typically remains rather vague.) Fritz Graf's essay reminds us of an additional caveat: myths are by their nature fluid. Even if we predicate long-lost, prehistorical initiatory rituals, with which myths that look initiatory were once associated, it is quite possible that these myths subsequently became connected with other, non-initiatory rituals and institutions during the historical period. It follows that the association of an apparently initiatory myth with a particular festival or ritual does not make that festival or ritual itself initiatory, and thus the association between the two, in and of itself, offers little in the way of an answer to my questions.

A couple of further points must be emphasized. First, each myth that includes what we are tempted to call initiatory themes must be examined in itself, apart from similar myths. If we accept Angelo Brelich's suggestion that the story of Jason is initiatory, this does not automatically mean that all Greek "quest" tales of a similar nature are also initiatory, as Vladimir Propp would have us believe. The devil is in the details: Graf suggests that it is specifically Jason's arrival with only one sandal (*monosandalos*) in Iolchus and Medea's identity as an initiatory figure that confirm Brelich's analysis. With his first suggestion I agree; concerning the second I do not² – but the larger lesson to be learned is that myths exhibiting the "quest" theme can serve many functions and we would be foolish to dub each of them "initiatory" without looking for more specific support within them.

My second point concerns mythic narratives, as opposed to myths *per se*. A given myth may exhibit initiatory themes and even initiatory details, but a particular author may choose to emphasize or deemphasize them – few scholars would suggest that adolescent initiation is a prominent theme in Apollonius Rhodius' narration of Jason's story, for example, even though Apollonius dutifully describes his hero as wearing only one sandal already in the tenth line of his epic. In my opinion, indeed, it is difficult even to discuss initiatory myths in ancient Greece, because all that remains to us (except for some interesting but often opaque artistic representations) are *narrations* of myth, behind each of which lie particular authorial intentions. Once we remember this, we have to add a new question to my list. Not only must we ask on what occasions myths that we identify as initiatory were narrated in historical Greece, but what role the author of the particular narrative played in making the myth initiatory. Did he draw attention to initiatory themes that already were intrinsic to the myth? Did he add initiatory flourishes to what was not, in other versions, an initiatory myth? Did he ignore initiatory themes that came out in other versions of the myth?

My contribution to the exploration of these issues will be to examine how a mythic theme that often has been called initiatory – that of the cattle raid – was used in the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes*, and to consider with what sort of performative occasion the *Hymn*’s exposition of this theme might have been linked.³ I hope to demonstrate, in the course of this, how an old “initiatory” myth might have been recycled during the historical period. I also hope, more generally, to demonstrate anew how versatile a tool myth could be, for in the course of proposing a performative context for the *Hymn*, I will suggest that the connection between a myth and a ritual or festival sometimes was neither directly aitiological in the sense that the last part of the *Hymn* “explains” the cult of the bee maidens, nor even mirror-like in the sense that the myth of Perseus and Medusa, for example, reflects a Spartan ritual in which adolescents combatted older men wearing frightening female masks.⁴ A myth narrated in institutionalized setting – at a festival or during a ritual, for example – might express the same tensions that the ritual or festival did, but through a different set of codes; there need not be exact parallels between the storyline and characters of a myth and the sequence of actions and participants in a festival or ritual for the two to convey the same messages. In fact, by rephrasing, rather than simply repeating, the messages that a ritual or festival conveys, a myth may help to ensure that they are delivered in their full complexity; what one cannot express, the other may. Remembering this may help us to understand better how other “initiatory” myths were used in historical Greece as well.

In the next section of this chapter, I will review the ways in which cattle-raids express concerns that are relevant to maturing males both in general and in the *Hymn*. Then, I will survey our evidence for Hermes’ role as a divine protector and guide of such males during the late archaic and early classical periods, and will propose that the likeliest performative occasion for the *Hymn* was one or more of the athletic festivals that were celebrated all over Greece by the time to which most scholars date the *Hymn*, the late sixth or fifth century.⁵ Finally, I will discuss how the poet of the *Hymn* crafted his mythic theme to suit the occasion at which he performed, and sketch the ways in which an “initiatory” theme might be revitalized for new uses in a society where, although maturation remained a matter of great concern, formal initiation rituals no longer took place.

The myth: Hermes the cattle-raider

The *Hymn* tells the story of an infant who ventures out into the world and performs several impressive feats.⁶ He finds a tortoise, kills it and from its shell creates the first lyre. Then, having developed a craving for meat, he raids the cattle that his older brother Apollo has been herding.⁷ He invents fire sticks and sacrifices two of the cattle to twelve gods, hiding the rest of them. When finally discovered by Apollo, he feigns innocence but is forced to defend himself in front of Zeus and the other gods. Eventually, Apollo befriends his younger

brother and exchanges gifts with him: Apollo receives the remaining cattle and the newly invented lyre and in return gives Hermes a cow-whip, a caduceus and oversight of prophetic bee-maidens. Apollo also promises to make sure that Zeus bestows other responsibilities and honors on Hermes.

The narrative of the *Hymn* pivots around the cattle raid. Most of the *Hymn* (lines 65–end) discusses the raid itself, Apollo’s discovery of the raid, or repercussions that directly result from Apollo’s discovery, such as Hermes’ and Apollo’s argument in front of Zeus, their reconciliation and their eventual exchange of gifts. In contrast to all other versions of the story, which either omit the invention of the lyre or situate it after the theft of the cattle, the *Hymn* places the invention of the lyre and Hermes’ first song before the raid (lines 24–64).⁸ As I will show below, this sequence of events allowed the poet to draw a contrast between Hermes’ first song and another, later song that Hermes performs to the lyre after having raided the cattle (423–33) and thereby to emphasize the important changes in Hermes’ nature and status that the raid has brought about. Thus, in the *Hymn*, the invention of the lyre is brought closely into connection with the raid despite the fact that it precedes it.

Cattle raids and their aftermath are well-known subjects not only in Greek myth but also in the myths of other Indo-European peoples. Bruce Lincoln, Françoise Bader and P.C. Walcot have discussed the close association between cattle raids, either real or narrated, and young men’s initiation rituals or coming-of-age ceremonies in Indo-European cultures.⁹ They have shown that cattle-raiding was understood to demonstrate a young man’s ability both to provide wealth for his family and to defend that wealth, insofar as cattle raids often take the form of retrieving cattle that an outsider has stolen. They have also demonstrated the close connection in Indo-European cultures between cattle-raiding and war: cattle-raiding was understood to prepare a young man for life as a warrior, a role that every adult male was expected to assume; by raiding cattle, a young man proved that he was capable of becoming a warrior and thus a man. Once he had become a warrior, he continued to take part in raids. In fact, considering that many wars were motivated by desire for cattle, cattle-raiding could be considered the defining activity of the warrior in some cultures, as Lincoln has noted.¹⁰

Most importantly, the possession of cattle, and therefore the ability to raid and to protect or recover them, determined the amount of honor that a man held within his group.¹¹ This connection between cattle-raiding and honor reflects not only the fact that raiding demonstrates a man’s fitness as a provider or a warrior, but also, and more importantly, the fact that successful raiding or recovery of cattle demonstrates the individual’s physical strength, daring, resourcefulness and initiative – qualities considered intrinsic to manhood. Michael Herzfeld has shown that in contemporary Crete, animal-raiding is still a means of proving manhood but, in a modification of the Indo-European paradigm, it also serves to forge a “spiritual kinship” (*sindeknia*) between a young man who raids cattle and the older man from whom he raids

them, once the cattle have been returned. This *sindeknia* is crucial to establishing a young man within his society.¹²

Maturation was a matter of great concern to the ancient Greeks just as it was to most peoples, and Greek myth correspondingly presented young men as undergoing a variety of trials and tests as they moved towards honorable inclusion in the adult community. One of these was cattle-raiding, which, just as in other cultures, often was associated with either the young man’s display of his ability as a warrior or his receipt of a warrior’s arms upon completion of the raid: Nestor’s raid is a well-known example.¹³ Greek mythic examples of cattle raids align with the Indo-European paradigm that scholars have described in many details as well: the raid is often preceded by combat against a monstrous or especially daunting foe (for example, against Geryon in the case of Heracles);¹⁴ the raid is often followed by the acquisition of arms (Nestor, again, although with a twist of the paradigm that delays the acquisition);¹⁵ and the raid is sometimes also followed by the kidnapping of women or winning of brides (for example, the case of Melampus, although he ends up giving the woman to his brother).¹⁶ In sum, there is little doubt that ancient Greek cattle-raid myths derive from Indo-European models and reflect the same general ideologies.

The cattle-raid myth in which Hermes stars follows the Indo-European paradigm insofar as Hermes’ raid wins him honor, particularly in the eyes of his older brother and father, and ultimately gains him admission into the “adult community” – that is, the Olympians, in front of whom the details of the raid are narrated. The connection between raiding and maturation is further emphasized in our *Hymn* by Apollo’s comment upon seeing the flayed hides of the two sacrificed cows: “you don’t need to grow up much more, Cyllenian One, Son of Maia” (407–8). Hermes’ raid also fits the paradigm insofar as it allows him to provide for his family, in this case his mother; the poet puts words into Hermes’ mouth that virtually tell us this: when Maia chastizes him for stealing the cattle, Hermes replies that she ought not to treat him like a child, and then tells her that he will become master of whatever art will best provide sustenance for her and himself. They will not continue to suffer sitting alone in their cave, he says, deprived of prayers and gifts; he will ensure that they grow rich in offerings and that he wins honor – he has already begun to do this by stealing Apollo’s cattle (163–72). The sharply dismissive tone in which Hermes rejects his mother’s scoldings, emphasizing that *he* is in charge of *her* welfare, makes another point abundantly clear as well: he is leaving the world of women. We are reminded of Telemachus’ similarly assertive words to Penelope immediately after he has decided to leave her side and search for his father. As Adele Haft has noted, this conflict between mother and son, which is prominent in our *Hymn*, is completely absent from other versions of the story, suggesting that the author of our *Hymn* particularly wanted to emphasize Hermes’ departure from childhood.¹⁷

Thus, Hermes' myth, especially as it is narrated in the *Hymn*, can be grouped with other cattle-raid myths as a "coming-of-age" tale or "initiation" myth. But Hermes' raid also differs from the older Indo-European paradigm in two ways. The first is that in some versions, Hermes is an infant rather than an adolescent on the brink of manhood. Yet, his precocious leap ahead to the activities of adolescents conforms to the way that Greek gods typically behave as infants, as Càssola has noted.¹⁸ Apollo, according to his Homeric *Hymn*, is so strong at birth that he immediately bursts his golden swaddling bands and announces to his nurses that his proper concerns are the lyre, the bow and the prophetic arts (lines 127–32). Athena, in one of her Homeric *Hymns*, jumps from her father's head fully armed, ready to assume her military duties (28.7–9).¹⁹ Analogously, Hermes' infant cattle raid signifies that his proper concerns are the care of cattle²⁰ and the care of adolescent males with whom cattle raids are associated – I will return to the latter topic below.²¹

The second difference between other Indo-European cattle-raid tales and the story told in the *Hymn to Hermes* is that, rather than becoming enemies, the cattle-raider and his victim become friends, as several passages from the *Hymn* make clear.²² Haft has interpreted this friendship with reference to Herzfeld's Cretan material and suggested that in ancient Greece, raids were similarly undertaken for the purpose of forging bonds between a raider and his victim. Haft's suggestion can be supported by a story that Plutarch tells in his biography of Theseus (30.1–2): Pirithous drove Theseus' cattle away from Marathon and, when he knew that Theseus was pursuing him, turned around to meet him. Praising Theseus, Pirithous returned the cattle and won his friendship. Nonetheless, the fact that all other ancient Greek cattle raid stories present a situation in which the raider and his victim are enemies – a situation, in fact, in which the raider usually ends up killing his victim – is puzzling, and requires further comment.

I would begin by stressing the distinction between myth and real life. The primary purpose of cattle-raid *myths* is to demonstrate that young men win admission to the adult community by displaying certain qualities: bravery, initiative, and physical strength being among the most obvious. Most myths therefore exaggerate the monstrosity of the victim from whom the young man raids cattle so as to magnify the dangers he confronts and thus glorify his bravery, initiative, and strength. In narrations of *real* raids that take place within the confines of a small community, there is no point in pretending that the victim is anything but an ordinary man – both because every listener knows him as a neighbor and because such pretense would undercut one of the purposes of raids, namely the establishment of *sindeknia* between a raider and a victim who are by definition similar to one another, insofar as they belong to the same group. This does not mean that the story cannot glorify the raider – judging from Herzfeld's transcripts, modern raiders do brag about the bravery, initiative and strength they used to steal animals – but the exercise of these qualities stops short of killing the victim.

We might guess, then, that unlike other ancient Greek cattle-raid myths of the “Nestor” type, which follow the Indo-European paradigm closely, the stories of both Hermes’ and Pirithous’ raids represent a variation of the paradigm more in line with a form of animal-raiding actually practiced in historical Greece that was similar in nature to those Herzfeld has studied. But why would it be in only these two stories, out of all Greek cattle-raid myths, that we find such a variation? In the case of Theseus and Pirithous, I would suggest it is because they are figures who, in the biographical tradition on which Plutarch drew, had been assimilated as much as possible to real men in order to support Athenian claims of Theseus’ historicity. If we had a similar biography of, for example, Heracles, which drew on traditions supporting Argive claims of his historicity, we might find him participating in a similar raid. In the case of Hermes, as will become clearer in later portions of this chapter, I would suggest it is because the myth served as a model for male behavior in contexts that facilitated passage into a larger community of men – that is, contexts that fostered the forging of bonds. This will also help to explain why it is Apollo, rather than a monstrous foe, who plays the victim.

To sum up the argument so far: myths of cattle-raiding sent a message to young men who were on the brink of adulthood: namely, that to win honor and acceptance among other men, one must develop and display certain qualities that society expects from men. Even in groups where boys did not practice cattle-raiding as part of their maturation process – say, among aristocratic Greek families of the classical period – the *myth* of the cattle raid would have remained meaningful so long as the qualities the raiders demonstrated continued to be among those that constituted manliness.

The festival: games for Hermes Agonios

Given the thematic focus of its myth, the *Hymn to Hermes* would most appropriately have been performed during a festival of Hermes that encouraged or celebrated the maturation of males. And in fact, Hermes was charged with just such concerns.²³ Most importantly for the purposes of this chapter, from the late archaic age onwards, Hermes patronized the athletic contests (*agônes*) in which aristocratic males began to compete during childhood. Simonides, Aeschylus and Pindar refer to Hermes as “Enagonios” and “Agonios,” titles that he continued to receive throughout antiquity.²⁴ Athletic festivals called Hermaia, which eventually were celebrated all over the Greek world,²⁵ particularly stress Hermes’ connection to maturing males in this setting, for in cases where we have more than passing reference to Hermaia, it becomes clear from the frequent use of words like *paides*, *neaniskoi*, *neoi*, and *epheboi*, that they focused on boys and young men. Plato and Aeschines, for example, mention only *paides* and *neaniskoi* participating at the Hermaia in Athens and the latter refers to laws restricting even the presence of older males during the competitions. In some inscriptions concerning

Hermaia, care is taken to specify the point at which individual competitors pass from one age category to another and rules are laid down to protect and discipline the younger participants.²⁶

Although our richest record of Hermaia (like our richest records of most festivals) comes from the wealth of inscriptions produced during the Hellenistic and imperial periods, and although the earliest explicit uses of the term Hermaia are found in Plato and Aeschines, the tone of Aeschines' comments, and particularly his invocation of established laws concerning the Hermaia to support his arguments, implies that at least in Athens, this festival was quite a bit older. Scholiasts to Pindar, following local historians, tell us that Hermaia were already being held in Achaian Pellene during Pindar's time; these were famous for the warm cloaks given as prizes, to which Pindar himself refers at *Nemean* 10.44 and *Olympian* 9.97–8.²⁷ The ability of the Pellenian Hermaia to attract competitors from as far away as Rhodes (*Olympian* 7) and Locrian Opous (*Olympian* 9) already in the 460s suggests that they had been established at least several decades earlier.

Organized athletics, especially agonistic athletics, perform some of the same functions that traditional coming-of-age procedures do in other cultures.²⁸ Most obviously, athletics help to develop a young body through physical exercise and then provide a stage on which that body and its skills can be displayed; Hellenistic inscriptions indicate that some athletic festivals, including Hermaia, awarded prizes not only to those who won athletic events but also to those who best exemplified *euandρεία* and *euexia* – “manliness” and “vigor.” Behavioral *desiderata* also can be developed and displayed through athletics: at some games, including some Hermaia, prizes were given to participants who exemplified *eutaxia* – “orderly behavior” – and *philoponia* – “industriousness”.²⁹ If a young man were skillful and lucky enough to win the athletic contests themselves, all the better – he was welcomed back into his community with the fanfare due a victor and started his career as an adult with *timê* (“honor”) that helped to ensure his success among other men. Athletics also shared with other coming-of-age procedures, including cattle raids, the charge of preparing young men to become warriors, as a number of ancient authors tell us.³⁰ A Tanagran legend makes this particularly clear: when the town was attacked by the Eretrians, Hermes led the young men into battle brandishing not a spear but a strigil, and after the Eretrians were averted, Hermes received cult under the epithet of Promachos and was portrayed on the city's coins under that title with his strigil in hand.³¹ Hellenistic inscriptions indicate that at some athletic contests, older youths received arms as their prizes, which underscores the connection between games and war – and also provides another parallel between athletics and cattle raids, as raids often culminate in the raider receiving his first arms.³²

Both athletics and cattle-raiding, then, mark progress towards maturation and honorable incorporation into adult male society. Many of the specific qualities or skills they inculcate are identical: each prepares young men to

become warriors, each requires and develops physical stamina and skill, each demands initiative. There are also differences: cattle-raiding requires a cunning and resourcefulness that athletics usually do not,³³ for example, and athletics require physical *sôphrosynê* (“self-discipline”) to a degree that is not usually required by raiding. But overriding these differences is the implication that, among other things, cattle raids and athletics are viewed as the stuff from which manhood is constructed.

The thematic and functional links between athletics and cattle-raiding suggest that the *Hymn to Hermes* could appropriately have been performed at one or more of the athletic contests focusing on younger males at which Hermes was honored – that is to say, for one or more of the Hermaia.³⁴ Although we cannot prove that Hermaia existed in Greek cities by the time our *Hymn* was composed, the facts that (1) we can date Hermes’ role as a god of competitive athletics as early as the late sixth century (Simonides fr. 555); (2) there is good reason to suppose Hermaia were held in at least Pellene by the early fifth century; and (3) the *Hymn* is dated to the late sixth or fifth century, should encourage us to pursue the idea at least as a working hypothesis. In the climate of boys’ and young men’s festivals such as the Hermaia, a story about maturation would have rung true in the same way that stories about mythical and historical heroes rang true when sung by young men at symposia, as Jan Bremmer has discussed:³⁵ the protagonists’ actions, even if they could not or would not be imitated by the listeners, exemplified qualities that the listeners were meant to develop and deploy in situations they encountered in their own lives. The narration of these stories within the symposium, a setting that itself fostered maturation, further underscored the centrality of these qualities to manhood.³⁶

Putting it together: the poet

Using the performative setting that I have proposed for the *Hymn* as a working hypothesis, I now will explore the *Hymn* and the way that it adapts its myth to its occasion. I will focus on two issues: the manner in which the poet develops Apollo’s role, and the ways in which he tailors the myth so as to draw its protagonist and his audience together.

Apollo

Apollo plays some part in almost all³⁷ versions of the story of Hermes’ cattle raid, but the poet of our *Hymn* has given Apollo a role that virtually equals that of Hermes. Apollo enters the *Hymn* at line 185 and from there until the end – that is, for seventy percent of the *Hymn* – he is either on stage alone or shares the limelight with Hermes. Apollo has several speeches of considerable length; indeed, his speaking lines in the *Hymn* outnumber those of Hermes. The *Hymn* ends with an exaltation of the Delphic Oracle, one of Apollo’s most famous shrines.

Within the context of a festival celebrating male maturation that I have proposed as a performative setting for the *Hymn*, Apollo's prominence makes sense for several reasons. First, throughout Greece, Apollo was the god most closely and frequently associated with aspects of male maturation (including, at times, athletics); thus, even in contexts dedicated to other deities who patronized particular aspects of male maturation, such as Hermes, we should not be surprised to find Apollo present.³⁸

My second point brings us back to cattle raids. As I discussed earlier, the myth of Hermes' raid departs from the standard Indo-European paradigm in uniting the raider and victim and in doing so resembles cattle-raid stories in which establishment of *sindeknia* (if I may borrow the modern term) between a male outside of the group and a male inside of the group is the aim. Our *Hymn* develops this theme particularly well. Apollo is presented as an older male, already rich in honor and responsibilities within his group, the Olympians, and thus exemplifies the goal towards which Hermes is striving. Notably, following the two gods' conciliation, some of Hermes' new duties and rights even mirror those of Apollo: he becomes a cattle-herder like Apollo, for example, and indeed, at the end of the poem, the two gods herd the recovered cattle away in tandem as if to emphasize their unity (503–4).³⁹

But as much as the final section of the *Hymn* develops the gods' similarities to one another, it also reminds us that Apollo, the older male, will remain Hermes' superior. In offering the new lyre to Apollo as a gift of reconciliation, Hermes emphasizes its appropriateness to a god who is *already* known for his vocal skills (478–9): “Sing well with this clear-voiced companion in your arms, for you understand how to speak beautifully (*kata kosmon*).” He goes on to describe the lyre itself as capable of teaching all manner of things to those who know how to consult it with skill and wisdom, but as babbling in vain to those who use it ignorantly or rudely (482–9). The lyre, then, is an instrument associated with speech, and for those who know how to play it properly, with significant speech. In contrast, the new instrument that Hermes invents to replace his lyre, the syrinx, not only is not credited with the power to “speak” itself but by its very nature as a wind instrument prevents the man who plays it from speaking, either. Hermes acquiesces in taking the back seat to Apollo not only in music, then, but in speech – a striking fate for a god who has demonstrated his own skill in speaking several times in this *Hymn* and who was, in the world outside of the *Hymn*, well known as the patron of rhetoric and other forms of persuasive speech.

Among the gifts that Apollo bestows on Hermes in return for the lyre is the promise that he will become the patron of a form of divination practiced on Apollo's home turf of Delphi. In receiving this charge, as in herding cattle, Hermes is assimilated to his older brother, but just as the syrinx is vocally subordinated to the lyre, this form of divination will be inferior to that of Apollo's great oracle itself. At his oracle, Apollo transmits the divine voice (*omphê* 532) of Zeus to mortals by means of his own divine voice (*omphê* 543

and 545). The role of the Pythia, human transmitter of Apollo’s divine voice, is elided here, as if to emphasize the directness with which Zeus’ voice, through Apollo’s voice, is conveyed to mortals. Non-divine speech does enter into the process – humans must observe the voice (*phônē*) and motions of meaningful birds and be careful to ignore birds who speak in vain (543–6) – but only at a preliminary stage, when they are deciding whether to consult Apollo’s oracle at all. Hermes’ divinatory art, in contrast, will depend on the voices of animals: he will be in charge of bees who rage about, eager to speak the truth after they have eaten honey, and buzz about, lying, when they have not eaten it (552–63). Hermes’ role will be to question the bees and then use his divine voice (*omphē* 566) to teach mortals what he has learned from them (564–6). At Apollo’s oracle, the most authoritative voice in the cosmos is mediated to mortals by the voice of the god who knows how to speak *kata kosmon*; Hermes can mediate for mortals only the inarticulate voices of animals. As if to underline the subordination of the latter to the former, our poet has Apollo explain to Hermes that he himself had divined with the bees when he was a younger god (556–8). Here, too, Hermes will follow in his brother’s path, but a few steps behind.

Thus the poet of the *Hymn* portrays the relationship between an older male and a younger male exactly as we would expect in a “coming-of-age” tale or “initiatory” myth: the older male will accept, support, and even train the younger male in skills that he himself has mastered, so long as the younger male acquiesces in his proper, subordinate role. But the poet of the *Hymn* goes even further: Apollo is portrayed not only as a model, sponsor, and teacher for Hermes, but also as a figure who personally can either facilitate or prevent Hermes’ entry into the Olympian family and thus into his own, mature identity. Earlier in the *Hymn*, before he recovers the cattle, Apollo threatens to throw Hermes into Tartarus,⁴⁰ where he would (256–9) “wander forever as a ruler over tiny men (*oligoisi andrasin*).” The word *oligos* (“small” or “tiny”) is used only fifteen lines earlier to describe Hermes’ identity as a “tiny child” (*paid’ oligon*, 245) and it is used five lines before that to describe Hermes curling up in a ball in his cradle, just before Apollo enters Maia’s cave. The only other time that any form of *oligos* is used anywhere in the *Hymn* is when Apollo later describes Hermes’ identity as an infant (456). Thus, in this *Hymn* and particularly in the scene in question, *oligos* suggests extreme youth or the tiny size that accompanies it.⁴¹ The phrase *oligoisi andrasin* therefore should be translated as “immature males” or “boys.” Apollo’s threat implies that Hermes’ failure to learn his place will condemn him to wander in Tartarus as a leader of other boys who died before adulthood – that is, that Apollo can truncate Hermes’ maturation at a stage that keeps him a child forever.

After their differences have been settled, the poet describes at length how the now beneficent Apollo sponsors Hermes’ entrance into the divine community, not only endowing him with the right to divine by bees, as I discussed above, but also, as in most versions of the myth, the cow-whip

and caduceus by which Hermes will ply his new trade of cowherding (gifts that functionally approach, therefore, the weapons traditionally given to newly minted warriors in other cattle-raid myths) (497 and 529). Apollo further promises to make him a “glorious and thriving leader among the gods,” to make sure that there is “*kleos* (“renown”) among the immortal gods” for both Hermes and Maia (458–61), and to convince Zeus to bestow other prerogatives that will give Hermes his proper *timai* (“honors”) and thus his place among the gods. The length at which our poet treats Apollo and Hermes’ conciliation reveals what a neat and useful twist of the older cattle-raid paradigm this ending really is, for it lays bare one of the implicit realities of coming-of-age in virtually any culture: until he has raided cattle or accomplished whatever other task his society requires of him, a boy is, for all practical purposes, shut out of his own group. It is to the males of his own group that he must prove himself and from whom he will receive his responsibilities and rights.⁴²

By emphasizing all of this, the poet thus problematizes Hermes’ coming-of-age, and by extension, that of the boys who, I have conjectured, made up the poet’s audience. Implicitly the poet suggests that, to join the adults, a boy must simultaneously challenge and placate them; the adults, for their part, must simultaneously keep the young reasonably within the bounds of discipline and yet allow them enough freedom to demonstrate their worthiness. It is the ability to express just these tensions and contradictions, in part, that again makes Hermes’ raid a better model for youths than the myth of Nestor’s raid or Heracles’ raid, for example, in both of which the hero raids cattle from enemies. Notably, in some societies where formal initiation rituals exist, the older men not only organize and administer the rites, but engage in mock battles with the initiates, sometimes disguised as monsters or demons. The Spartan ritual to which I referred earlier, where older men donned gorgon-like masks to fight with younger men, plays a similar role.⁴³ As in the case of Hermes, the boy is aware that the “outsiders” against whom he proves his mettle are really the “insiders” to whose company he wants to be admitted. On a less ritually dramatized level, the fact that contemporary Cretan youths raid cattle from men of their own group expresses this as well. There is some risk involved in such thefts – at times, Herzfeld notes, third parties must even be called in to mediate – but it is a risk that is likely to result in the raider’s inclusion in the group represented by his victim.

Audience and poem

Anyone who makes a living by conveying ideas to an audience, whether they do so in the role of an entertainer, a teacher or (sometimes) both, must make those ideas seem relevant to their listeners. For archaic poets, who used myth as a means to convey ideas, this meant collapsing the distance between the “here and now” in which their audiences existed and the “there and then” in

which the myths took place. Notably, none of the strategies by which archaic poets typically did this in hymns, including those that have been discussed recently in detail by Mary Depew, can be found in the *Hymn to Hermes*.⁴⁴ There are no deictic words or references to visible features of the cult whose festival is in progress, for example, which other poets use to remind their audiences that hymns are gifts to the gods who are being worshipped and thus forge links between human and divine worlds. Nor does the *Hymn* narrate aetiological stories that remind the audience of the origin of the cult in which they are participating. I propose that the poet of the *Hymn* used a different strategy, collapsing the distance between his audience and the myth by bringing the theme of the myth up-to-date: that is, by drawing the actions performed by Hermes and those of his audience closer together. To demonstrate this, I will focus on Hermes’ invention and use of the lyre and Hermes’ sacrifice.

The lyre

Early in the poem, Hermes sings to the new lyre “beautifully, trying things out extemporaneously like young men at feasts, who tease each other boldly” (54–6). Later, when Apollo first hears Hermes play, he says: “I never cared for clever musical works at the feasts of young men as much as I care for your lyre-playing” (453–4), and declares that his brother is a *daitos betairos* – a “companion of the feast” (436–7). Hermes, giving the lyre to his brother, tells Apollo “from now on, confidently take it to the blooming feast and the lovely dance and the glorious revel (*komós*), a joy both night and day” (475–82). These descriptions are proleptic; the poet reminds his audience of how the lyre is used at contemporary symposia.

As Oswyn Murray and Jan Bremmer have shown, the Greek symposium was the “historical successor of the common meal of archaic warrior clubs.” Bremmer has particularly emphasized the social functions served by the participation of aristocratic adolescent males, suggesting that although initiation rituals *per se* no longer existed in Greece, the symposia accomplished many of their purposes. The lyre, he notes, played an essential part in this process, for young men accompanied themselves on it while singing songs that “glorified the deeds of mythical and historical heroes, examples that they should look up to in their own life.”⁴⁵

Thus, when the *Hymn*’s poet likens the young god’s use of the lyre to that of youths at feasts, he reminds the boys and youths in his audience of experiences that they have had or are soon to have as part of their maturation process. Generally, then, the allusion serves to strengthen their identification with Hermes, but the poet goes even further than this. In the *Hymn*, we hear Hermes sing to the lyre twice (57–62, 427–33). Hermes could not use the same themes for his songs as young men of historical Greece did: cosmogonically speaking, there were no “mythical and historical heroes to glorify” at the time

that he was born, nor would the deeds of mortal heroes have been really appropriate material for a young immortal, anyway.

But the poet was a skillful adapter. In Hermes' first song, which he performs alone before he sets out on his raid, he extols the tale of his own begetting by Zeus, his birth and the splendors of his mother's home, and thus he establishes, at least to his own satisfaction, his rightful claim to honor (*timê*) equal to that of other gods. In his second song, performed in front of Apollo, Hermes recites the birth and honors of each of his divine relatives in turn. By praising the gods just as mortal boys praise the heroes, Hermes signals that the gods are the exemplars he wishes to follow; theirs is the group with which he identifies. Thus, the poet uses Hermes' singing subtly to suggest that an individual's maturation and entry into adult society depends upon his own initiative as well as external factors.

He also uses it to mark the distance towards adulthood that Hermes has traveled in the course of his experiences. I noted earlier that the *Hymn* uniquely situates the invention of the lyre before Hermes' cattle raid, in contrast to all other versions of the myth, which either omit its invention altogether or situate it after the raid. This sequence of events enabled the poet of the *Hymn* to draw a contrast between Hermes' status among the Olympians before and after the raid. The god's first song, performed before he raids the cattle, exalts his mother and her home – these are, after all, the only things that he knows well enough to describe at this point in his life. His second song, performed after the raid, is quite different: it takes in the entire cosmos and all of its divine inhabitants, the maturing god's proper *milieu*.⁴⁶ It is the raid, and the after-effects of the raid, that have enabled Hermes to move from the small domestic sphere of his birth into the larger social sphere of the gods where he is determined to make his career.

The sacrifice

The poet similarly adapts the story of Hermes' sacrifice to remind his audience of experiences they have had or hope to have. After raiding the cattle, Hermes stops on the banks of the Alpheios and sacrifices two of them, offering their meat to twelve gods (*Hymn* 112–37);⁴⁷ no other ancient author sets the sacrifice here. This detail, as other scholars have noted, probably refers to the famous cult of the Twelve Gods at the sanctuary of Zeus in Elis, where the Olympic Games were held.⁴⁸ Thus, the poet situates Hermes' mythic act within the world of athletic *agônes* – indeed, he locates it at the site of the *greatest* athletic contest, where any young athlete would aspire to win one day or at least compete and where Hermes himself was worshipped, as I shall discuss shortly below.

In contrast to the only other detailed version of the sacrifice, that of Apollodorus, in our *Hymn* Hermes does not eat any of the sacrificial meat, although he sorely longs to (lines 130–3; cf. Apollod. 3.10.2). Gods, of course,

were supposed to enjoy only the smell of meat’s smoke; had he eaten of it, Hermes would have marked himself as a non-god and excluded himself from the group he wished to join.⁴⁹ Here, then, it is his own *sôphrosynê* (“self-discipline”) that enables Hermes to progress towards inclusion in the group that he desires to join – again, a relevant message for any young athlete who was listening. But the poet’s choice of locale makes Hermes’ actions even more relevant, for two reasons. First, at least until the 480s, and perhaps longer, athletes planning to compete in the Olympics were required to abstain from meat for thirty days – thus, by abstaining from meat on the banks of the Alpheios, Hermes is following not only the rules of behavior required of gods, but the rules required of the athletes who are meant to identify with and emulate him.⁵⁰

Second, it may have been traditional for Olympic victors to sacrifice to the Twelve Gods to whom the poet alludes – Pindar describes Psaumis of Camarina, winner of the mule race in 448, as doing so in a manner that suggests it was a regular custom (O. 5.1–7). If so, then Hermes’ sacrifice can also be interpreted to mark him as a “victor”; that is, his cattle raid, now completed, has been crowned by his act of sacrifice.⁵¹ The two interpretations I am suggesting are not compatible with one another by the terms of real-world logic (we would expect that once an athlete had won, he would leave his vegetarian diet behind and partake of the meat he sacrificed) but that is not the point. Hermes’ actions would have brought to mind a complex of associations concerning both what it meant to compete at the grandest of all athletic games and what it meant to win there.

We need to consider these Twelve Gods further. They were not those that we are wrongly conditioned to view as canonical by introductory mythology books. Rather, like all divine groups worshipped in real cults, alongside familiar deities such as Zeus and Hera this group included a mix of local gods such as the river Alpheios and gods who were fairly uncommon in cult, such as Cronus and Rhea.⁵² Notably, however, Hermes was one of the Twelve Gods worshipped at Olympia; thus, by refusing the meat in the *Hymn* and enjoying only the smell of its smoke, he claims what the audience already knew to be his rightful place not only among gods in general but specifically among the gods whom the most successful of athletes would worship. Even more important is the particular company Hermes keeps here. The Twelve Gods at Olympia shared six “twin” altars. Each god, in other words, had an altar mate – and the god with whom Hermes shared his double altar at Olympia was Apollo. Thus, Hermes’ actions not only emphatically mark him as worthy to become *a* god, but specifically a god *equal to the one* whose superiority he had already challenged by his cattle raid.

Conclusions – and a few further thoughts on athletics and myth

Thanks to the poet's deft adaptations that drew Hermes' cattle raid and the experiences of contemporary boys together, the audience, as they listened to the story of Hermes' maturation, negotiated through proxy the same tensions as he did, despite the fact that there was no direct correspondence between Hermes' actions and any that they were likely to perform – aristocratic boys of historical Greece did not raid cattle. This identification of mythic subject and listeners is very different from what happens when, for instance, the *Hymn to Demeter* describes the goddess drinking a *kykeon*, an action that the listeners may have imitated during the Eleusinian Mysteries; or from what happens in hymns that invite the audience to witness the foundation of a cult site at which they will worship – as in the *Hymn to Apollo*, for example. In both those cases, the audience remains an audience, separated from the action narrated in the myth even if they imitate it or enjoy its long-term results. Indeed, to go a little further with an idea that Depew has emphasized recently, everything that underscores the fact that hymns are gifts to the gods, are vital links between the human and divine spheres, simultaneously builds a heightened awareness of the essential *separation* between the two spheres.⁵³ In the *Hymn to Hermes*, in contrast, rather than using internal signals such as deictic markers and aetiological stories to stress the *Hymn's* nature as a gift between disparate realms, the poet endeavors to transform the listeners into virtual participants in the mythic drama that he narrates, virtual doublets of Hermes. Public recitation of myth, then, almost functions as a ritual itself, as listeners negotiate the tensions that the myth expresses.

Why did the poet choose this strategy? The answer brings us back to the fact that adolescent initiation rituals *per se* did not exist in historical Greece – if they ever existed in Greece at all. In initiation rituals as we know them from other cultures, a participant's status is changed forever – immediately and irreversibly – as soon as the rite is completed, in the same way that baptism immediately changes the spiritual status of the baby whose head is sprinkled at the font. There were Greek rites and practices that *facilitated* or *acknowledged* young men's progress towards adulthood, such as athletic *agônes*, for example, or a sacrifice to Demeter in which Athenian ephebes carried an ox on their shoulders,⁵⁴ but the Greeks never explicitly stated that these brought about a change in the participants – nor did they bring about changes in and of themselves alone. Rather, the Greek phenomena honed and demonstrated young men's abilities to function as adult males. For instance, the ox-lifting ritual showcased the ephebes' strength, their ability to cooperate as a group, and their support of the cults of the city.

Just as participation in athletics (which developed during the historical period in Greece, long after the disappearance of any erstwhile initiation rituals that we might imagine once existed) did not change a boy's status

definitively in the way that a traditional initiation ritual did, so neither did there develop any myths for athletic festivals that made an explicit connection between athletics and maturation. Myths associated with athletic festivals do play with the idea, insofar as some of them present young men engaging in activities associated with heroic adolescence. For example, Pelops gains a bride and a kingdom by winning a chariot race at Olympia and the Delphic story of Apollo killing the Python fits into the “dragon-killing” theme that is associated with young heroes all over the world. The Nemean foundation myth focuses on Opheltes, a male infant who miraculously brings aid to warriors even as he dies. Most tantalizingly, Melicertes, in whose honor the Isthmian games were founded, dies at the hands of Ino, a goddess associated with cults of social transition in various parts of Greece. But none of these stories ever quite makes the leap into an aetiological legend that straightforwardly connects athletics with maturation. The connection is intimated, rather than spelled out.

This pattern suggests that if a poet wished to express the association between athletics and maturation, he had to be inventive. He had to start with a myth that traditionally was associated with maturation, such as a myth of cattle-raiding, and then adapt it so as to ensure that the listeners to whom it most directly applied – aristocratic boys and young men – would identify with its protagonist. Performing the myth within the proper context would then heighten the socially transformative effects of both the myth and the festival itself. Or in other words, to return to the image I used in the introductory section of this chapter, the poet needed to convey the messages of the festival through a different code – through a myth that offered *thematic* parallels to the festival. In a culture such as the ancient Greeks’, sensing the parallels between cattle-raiding and athletics would not have required as much imagination as it might now require of us. For, not only was the way for making this particular link paved by Hermes himself, who had been established as both the star of a cattle-raid myth and a patron of athletics before the *Hymn* was composed, but myth and ritual were still *living* languages in Greece, possessed of all the communicative fluidity of which we sometimes forget they are capable, seeing only their petrified remains as we do. The brilliance of our poet lay in modifying the myth to fit the occasion at hand so well, in making the parallels work to convey the message so elegantly.

Appendix: Which Hermaia?

Given the peripatetic way in which poets earned their livings in archaic and early classical Greece, it is likely that the poet of the *Hymn to Hermes* composed it with the intention of performing it, with whatever adaptations might have been necessary, at more than one festival. The *Hymn* might even have been performed at athletic festivals other than Hermaia that included boys and young men, for as I noted earlier, Hermes was invoked quite widely as Agonios and Enagonios;

Pindar calls upon him thus when honoring victors in the Pythian and Isthmian Games (as does an early fifth-century inscription from the Eleusinian Games) and he uses similar phrases when honoring those in the Olympic and Nemean Games (see n. 24). Here I will examine briefly a few locales where the *Hymn* could have been performed, not with the intention of pinpointing a single site as “the” site of “original” performance, but to explore further how the *Hymn* would have worked within some performative contexts.

Pheneus

Pausanias reports that the Pheneatians esteemed Hermes most highly of all the gods, and hosted Hermaia in his honor. His traditional birthplace, Mt. Cyllene, lay within Pheneus’ borders and a local spot called Three Springs (Tricrena) was identified as the place where the nymphs had washed him after birth. Behind Hermes’ temple in Pheneus was the grave of the charioteer Myrtilus, whom local legend made Hermes’ son and whose body was said to have been washed ashore nearby after Pelops murdered him at the site of the future Olympic Games; the Pheneatians buried the body and sacrificed to Myrtilus every year as a hero. This looks like an attempt to connect the local god of athletics and his cult to the Olympic Games and one of its heroic figures.⁵⁵ In such an environment, the *Hymn*’s proposed allusion to the Olympic Games would resonate particularly well.

Apollo was present in Pheneus as well; the *Etymologicum Magnum*, in fact, claims that Mt. Cyllene was sacred to *both* Hermes and Apollo. *Delphic* Apollo was especially important: on a road leading north out of Pheneus was an old sanctuary to Apollo Pythios that, although in ruins by Pausanias’ time, still served as a site of worship for Apollo and Artemis. Continuing on this road, one reached the northern coast of the Peloponnese; almost directly across the Bay of Corinth was Cirrha, Delphi’s port, which suggests that the Pheneatians had easy access to the sanctuary lauded at the end of the hymn.⁵⁶

Thus, Pheneus not only had strong connections to Hermes and Apollo and a tradition of sponsoring Hermaia, but connections to Olympia and Delphi as well. The *Hymn*, especially given its early, prominent mention of Arcadia and Mt. Cyllene (line 2) would be well suited for performance here. Unfortunately, until Pausanias we hear nothing about Hermaia or any other games at Pheneus, however. A scholiast to Pindar who offers a list of various Arcadian games includes Hermaia, but does not specify in which Arcadian city they were held (scholia to *Olympian* 7.83 = 153a Dr.).

Pellene

As I noted earlier, Pellene hosted Hermaia that attracted competitors from outside the local area by at least the early classical period. Its sponsorship of Theoxenia, which were tied both to the Pellenian Hermaia and to the Delphic

Theoxenia (see n. 27), not only attests to the importance there of Apollo in general⁵⁷ but also suggests that Pellene wished to strengthen its connection to Delphi, which, as in the case of Pheneus, was within easy reach across the Bay of Corinth. Although Mt. Cyllene, Hermes’ birthplace, officially belonged to Arcadian Pheneus, Pellene lay in its shadow and controlled Mt. Chelydorea, reputedly the place where Hermes had found and hollowed out the tortoise he made into a lyre.

The main problem with imagining the *Hymn*, at least as we now have it, being performed in Pellene is that the poet makes no obvious reference to Pellene or its immediate environment; in fact, in the *Hymn*, Hermes finds the tortoise immediately outside of Maia’s cave, and thus on Mt. Cyllene rather than Mt. Chelydorea. This would jar against the ears of Pellenian listeners. Therefore, although the *Hymn* generally would work well at Pellenian Hermaia, we have to hypothesize that some adaptations were made to accommodate local feelings.

Delphi and Delos

The *Hymn*’s final section makes Delphi a very appealing site for performance of the *Hymn*, although, as I discussed earlier, there are thematic reasons for the focus on Apollo’s and Hermes’ roles at Delphi as well. Perhaps the *Hymn* would have been offered to Hermes at some point during the Pythian Games; we know from Pindar that here, as well as elsewhere, Hermes was charged with watching over the athletes. We have no information on whether Hermaia as such were celebrated at Delphi, although their great popularity throughout the rest of the Greek world makes it a good possibility.

By the Hellenistic period at the latest, Delos sponsored Hermaia that attracted competitors from all over Greece (see n. 25). The Homeric *Hymn to Apollo* already alludes to games at Delos that drew Ionians and their children from far and wide (147–50); we cannot say whether they were strictly in honor of Apollo or, perhaps, included honor for Hermes Agonios as well. Certainly, Delos was a place where Apollo’s role as a god of male maturation was in play from an early period. As we know from the *Hymn to Apollo*, the god’s Delian and Delphic interests could be combined, which would make even the final portion of the hymn appropriate for performance in Delos, especially in front of an pan-Hellenic audience.⁵⁸ As in the case of Pellene, the problem is that the existing *Hymn* makes no reference to anything Delian; again, we have to imagine that some modification in that direction would have been made before it was presented to a Delian audience.

Olympia

The *Hymn*’s allusion to Olympia’s cult of Twelve Gods, although appropriate within any agonistic context, makes Olympia itself a candidate for its

performance. As in the case of Delphi, we know from Pindar that Hermes Agonios was expected to help athletes competing in the Olympic Games. (As with Delphi, we have no knowledge of Hermaia *per se* being held here, however.) The friendly competition between the two brothers would have struck a particularly nice note at Olympia where they shared an altar and where, according to another legend, they had competed against each other in the first Olympic foot race (Pausanias 5.7.10). The only argument against Olympia as a site for performance of the *Hymn* in its current form is the same as that for several of the other possible sites: its failure to mention Olympia overtly.

Notes

- 1 A number of people offered helpful comments as I developed this chapter, for which I am grateful, including Mary Depew, Chris Faraone, Fritz Graf, David Leitao, Bruce Lincoln, William Race, Henk Versnel, Victoria Wohl, Froma Zeitlin, the students in my 2001 graduate seminar on the Homeric *Hymns*, and anonymous referees. This chapter is a refocused version of Johnston (2002b), which appeared in *Classical Philology*, and I thank both the editor, Shadi Bartsch, and the University of Chicago for allowing me to publish it here.
- 2 See Graf (1997a) esp. 37–43, and Johnston (1997) esp. 50–2.
- 3 In this chapter I will not examine the literary questions that surround the *Hymn* in any detail; for these, the reader is referred to the first portion of Johnston (2002b).
- 4 As proposed by Jameson (1990).
- 5 E.g., Kirk (1985) 74 suggests some point between late sixth and early fourth centuries; Janko (1982) 133–50 some time in the late sixth; Radermacher (1931) 216 and 222 and Eitrem (1906) 282 some time in the early fifth. In contrast, Allen, Halliday and Sikes (1936) 275–6 argued for the seventh century on the dubious grounds that the *Hymn* would refer only to places that still existed at the poet's time.
- 6 The version of the myth in the Homeric *Hymn* aligns by and large with other surviving versions so far as the major plot elements are concerned: see the surveys in Nisbet and Hubbard (1970) 125–8 and Allen, Halliday and Sikes (1936) 267–74. The earliest versions, of which we have only traces, are those of Hesiod frag. 256 M-W. and Alcman frags. 306Ca, 308a–d (Campbell), thus giving the myth a *terminus ante quem* of the late seventh or early sixth century and making it almost certain that the Homeric *Hymn* was not the earliest composition on the topic; variations of detail amongst later versions indicate that *Hymn* was not a particularly authoritative version. We can make a guess as to what the basic elements of the myth were if we identify the most common features of surviving versions: (1) Hermes is usually a youth or boy (in the Homeric *Hymn* and Sophocles' *Ichneutai* he is an infant); (2) he invents the lyre from a tortoise shell; (3) he steals cattle that belong to or are tended by Apollo; (4) he uses subterfuge to drive away and/or conceal them; (5) he propitiates Apollo with gifts and receives gifts in return.
- 7 The *Hymn* refers to the cattle both as belonging to the gods (72) and to Apollo himself (18, 22).
- 8 Hesiod frag. 256 M-W. and Alcman frags. 306Ca, 308a–d (Campbell) omit the lyre; Sophocles *Ichneutai* frag. 314.312 ff (Radt) and Apollodorus 3.10.2 place it after the raid. Cf. Shelmerdine (1984).

- 9 Lincoln (1981b), Bader (1980), Walcot (1979) and Lincoln (1976); cf. Burkert (1979) 78–98.
- 10 Lincoln (1981b) 102–3, who also has noted that, so strongly linked were cattle-raiding and war in ancient India, that in the *Rg Veda* the term for “cattle raid” is used as a synonym for “war.” Hesiod *Works and Days* 161–5 reflects something like this idea when he notes that one of the two reasons for the end of the heroic age was the quarreling of heroes over the cattle of Oedipus (the other was the quarreling of heroes over Helen).
- 11 Thucydides 1.5 cf. 1.11 and Walcot (1979) 330. Even Greek gods seem to have subscribed to this, as Walcot (1979) 328 points out: at *Odyssey* 12.382–3 we learn that if Helios had allowed the slaughter of his cattle to go unavenged, he would have been compelled to sink into Hades for shame, shining thereafter not among gods and mortals but among the dead.
- 12 Herzfeld (1985) ch. 8; Campbell (1964). Haft (1996) compares Hermes’ raid as narrated in the *Hymn* to the raids that Herzfeld discusses; she makes points that are similar to some that I make here, although we develop them differently.
- 13 *Il.* 11.670–761 and see Hainsworth (1993) *ad loc.* For further examples and discussion, see Bader (1980) and Walcot (1979). For discussion, also Haft (1996).
- 14 First mentioned at Hesiod *Theogony* 287–94, 981–3; cf. Apollodorus 2.5.10 and see further Gantz (1993) 402–3.
- 15 On Nestor’s acquisition of arms see especially Bader (1980); also Walcot (1979).
- 16 *Odyssey* 15.223–38 and see Heubeck and Hoekstra (1989) *ad loc.*
- 17 *Odyssey* 1.346–59. Haft (1996) 33–4 compares Maia’s reaction to Hermes’ raid to that of contemporary Cretan mothers who express anxiety about their sons’ raiding, or ridicule them. She also observes that Maia is far more prominent in the *Hymn* than other versions of the story and suggests that the poet uses her to represent the “constraints against which Hermes rebels in his bid for symbolic manhood . . .”
- 18 Càssola (1975) *ad* lines 17–18.
- 19 Artemis, according to a story that Apollodorus relates (1.4.1), assists her mother Leto at the birth of her brother Apollo as soon as she herself has emerged from the womb, thus foreshadowing her role as a goddess who helps parturient women.
- 20 See, for example, *Il.* 14.490–1 and *Od.* 14.435, Hes. *Th.* 444, Sem. fr. 20 (West), Paus. 2.3.4, 9.22.1–2, and cf. Baudy (1998) 427.
- 21 In contrast to Haft (1996) 28, who cites the fact that boys in contemporary Crete begin raiding cattle at a very young age; on page 32 she comes closer to the analysis I offer here.
- 22 Lines 436–end, esp. 460–2 (reading *hégemon’ bessô* in line 461), 503–10, 514–20 and 574–5.
- 23 Hermes’ interest in the maturation of younger boys is manifested through his kourotrophic and pedophoric roles in various myths, which were represented on Attic vases as early as the sixth century. For example, he conveys the infant Asclepius to Chiron (Pausanias 2.26.7), the infant Dionysus to Olympus (Pausanias 3.18.11), the infant Heracles to Olympus so that he may nurse at Hera’s breast (Hyginus *Astronomy* 2.43) and the young Dioscuri from Thalamae, where they were said to have been born, to Pellene where they were raised (Pausanias 3.26.2); for the vases and some later sculptures, Siebert (1990) 358–401. He was invoked at the Thesmophoria – a festival that promoted the birth and care of children – in the company of the Thesmophoroi (Demeter and Kore), Plutus, Kalligeneia, Kourotrophos and the Charites (Aristophanes *Thesmophoriazousae* 295). A Tanagran legend expresses his association

with older youths: Hermes once averted a plague from Tanagra by carrying a ram on his shoulders around the city's walls; every year thereafter, the most beautiful Tanagran ephebe had to repeat this act, symbolizing the ephebes' protection and regeneration of the city (Pausanias 9.22.1 and cf. Siebert (1990) 855–7 for possible artistic representations). In vase paintings from the late sixth and mid-fifth centuries, Hermes is often shown in the company of adolescent males: Siebert (1990) 863–6, 881–2, and 909–10. Generally on Hermes and the maturation of males, see also Marinatos (this volume), Baudy (1998) 428–9 and Costa (1982).

- 24 Simonides 555.1 (Campbell); Aeschylus frag. 384; Pindar *Pythian* 2.10, and *Isthmian* 1.60 and cf. *Olympian* 6.77 and *Nemean* 10.53; cf. Aristophanes *Wealth* 1161; *IG I²* 5 (early fifth century). Hermes also patronized the training that began to prepare boys for these contests as soon as they had left the care of women; statues of Hermes or altars dedicated to him were erected in *gymnasia*, *palaistrai* and *stadia* throughout the Greek world: Delorme (1960) *passim* (see his index under “Hermès,” “Hermès et Héraklès,” and “pilier hermaïque”); Siska (1933) (*non vidi*) and Michalowski (1930). Although most of our evidence for these statues and altars comes from the Hellenistic period, vase paintings that show ephebes in front of herms in settings that suggest *palaistrai* and *gymnasia* imply that such statues and altars appeared in some areas, including Attica, at least as early as the late sixth century (Siebert (1990) 143 and 144). Pausanias mentions statues of Hermes in the *gymnasia* at Laconian Las and Messenia that he regarded as extremely old (3.24.7, 4.32.1). On another black figure vase, Hermes crowns a youth after an athletic victory. On other vases, racehorses are marked with caducei, which again connects Hermes to athletic *agônes*. The opposite side of one such vase shows Hermes and Heracles (the other great patron of athletics) standing together at an offering table: ABV 307.59 and 315.3; on this topic and more generally on Hermes as a god of horseraces see Haspels (1936) 62 n. 2 and, esp. in Ionia, Graf (1985) 270–2.
- 25 Apameia: *MAMA* 6, 173; Beroia: *SEG* Macedonia 27 (1977) 261 and cf. Gauthier and Hatzopoulos (1993), which includes useful discussion of Hermaia in general, esp. at 95–123; Chalcis: *SEG* 29 (1979) 806; Delos: *IDélos* 1947, 1948, 1949, 2595 and see Mikalson (1998) 227; Istrus: *SEG* 25 (1975) 790; Lesbos: *IG xii Suppl.*, 122; Mylasa: *IKS* 34.1 (1987) 421; Pergamon: *IrPerg.* 252 and 256; Pheneus: Pausanias 8.14.10–11; Sestos: *OGI* 339; Tanagra: *IG* vii 971, 972 and 973.
- 26 Aeschines 1.10, Plato *Lysis* 206d and cf. *IG II²* 895, 1227, 2971, 2980 and Mikalson (1998) 195 with notes. The best example of Hellenistic restrictions comes from the Beroian inscription cited in the previous note, which explicitly extends the right of participation all the way up to age thirty, but strictly prohibits anyone older than that and subdivides the participants into smaller age groups including *paides* and *neaniskoi*. Most of the other inscriptions cited in the previous note mention *paides*, *neaniskoi*, *neoi*, and/or *epheboi* as well. It is impossible to be sure that fully mature males (*andres*) never competed in any city's Hermaia at any time, but the absence of reference to them in even the lengthier inscriptions suggests that Hermaia were viewed as special opportunities for younger males to display their skills.
- 27 On the Pellénian Hermaia, Pindar *Olympian* 9.98 with scholia = 146c Dr.; cf. Photius s.v. *Pellênikai chlainai*. Pellénian games are also mentioned in *Olympian* 13.109 and *Nemean* 10.44, but their scholia (= 155 and 82b Dr.) identify the games in question as Theoxenia in honor of Apollo (or, in the case of scholia to *Olympian* 13.109 as “Philoxenia,” almost surely an error for Theoxenia). They are mentioned as well in

Olympian 7.86, where a scholium (156c Dr.) says that “Theoxenia” and “Hermaia” were names for the *same* Pellenian games. Another scholium to *Olympian* 9.98 (146h Dr.) says that the Theoxenia and Hermaia were *both* Pellenian games but implies their independence from one another. The confusion amongst scholiasts and lexicographers as to which games Pindar means when he mentions Pellenian contests is most likely due to games called Theoxenia being added at some point to existing Hermaia, either by appending them to the end of the Hermaia, in the same way that Heraia were added to the end of the Olympic Games, or by celebrating them simultaneously; the Pellenian Theoxenia probably were instituted in imitation of the more famous Delphic Theoxenia, the only other festival called Theoxenia that was in honor of Apollo as opposed to the Dioscuri. Adding Theoxenia to Hermaia would make sense particularly if only non-adults were allowed to compete at the Hermaia; the Theoxenia could provide opportunities for men. Pausanias 7.27.4–6 mentions Theoxenia in Pellene in which men competed but says that silver coins were given as prizes and that only men competed. This may reflect changes that had been made by his day, or may suggest that the scholiasts’ connection of the Theoxenia with cloaks was mistaken. One further scholium, to *Nemean* 10.44 (82a Dr.), refers to Pellenian games called Diia at which cloaks were awarded, but these games are otherwise unknown. On the Pellenian Hermaia, the Theoxenia and their confusion, see also Nilsson (1906) 160 n. 4, cf. 394. Specifically on the “warm cloaks” given at the Hermaia see (in addition to Pindar *Olympian* 7.86 and 9.98 and *Nemean* 10.44 with their scholia and Photius all as cited above) Strabo 8.7.5, Pollux 7.67 and Hesychius s.v. *Pellēnikai chlainai* (who does not specify at which Pellenian games the cloaks were awarded), *Suidas* s.v. *Pellēnikai chlainai* (which says that the cloaks were given at the Pellenian Heraia, which looks like an error for Hermaia) and the schol. Aristophanes *Birds* 1421 (which mentions them in connection with both Hermaia and Heraia).

- 28 There are many treatments of the connection between athletics and maturation that go into more depth than I will here: Brelich (1969) esp. 450–6 and Jeanmaire (1939) 413–18 are among the earliest. Later scholars usually take up particular aspects, e.g., the nudity shared by both athletics and some rituals that celebrate maturation (Bonfante (1989) and cf. Sansone (1988) 110–12) or the expression of “initiatory” motifs in epinician poetry (Crotty (1992) 114–16 and cf. Kurke (1991) 71). Dickie (1984) focuses in the latter part of his essay on the connection as it is expressed in the Phaeacian episode of the *Odyssey*, but also gives an excellent overview of the question as a whole, citing evidence from the post-Homeric period as well.
- 29 See Gauthier and Hatzopoulos (1993) 101–6, Crowther (1991) and Crowther (1985), who discuss the evidence for these awards at certain games and for the value placed on these qualities in male society more broadly. They are also discussed briefly by Dickie (1984) 238–9.
- 30 Ancient passages expressing this idea include Xenophon *Hellenica* 5.5.23 and *Memorabilia* 3.12.5, Plato *Republic* 404a–b, 423c and *Laws* 832e, Diodorus Siculus 17.11.4, Plutarch *Quaest. Conv.* 639d–640a and Lucian *Anacharsis* 25. For discussion of various aspects of the topic, see Golden (1998) esp. 23–8, Gauthier and Hatzopoulos (1993) 102–4, Evjen (1992) 103–4, Papalas (1991) esp. 167, Perysinakis (1990); Krummen (1990) 33–97, esp. 52, and Scanlon (1988).
- 31 Pausanias 9.22.1–2. Cf. Siebert (1990) 855–7 for possible artistic representations and see discussion in Baudy (1998) 429.

- 32 See Gauthier and Hatzopoulos (1993) 99–102. Note also that the generals (*strategoi*) at Athens sacrificed to Hermes under the title of Hegemonios (Aristophanes *Wealth* 1159 with scholia, *IG II²* 1496.85 and 2873) and that his title at Megalopolis was Agetor (Pausanias 8.31.7); both bespeak his role as a leader of warriors. For representations of Hermes with warriors from the mid-sixth through mid-fifth centuries, see Siebert (1990) 858–62.
- 33 Although, as W. Race reminds me, we have Pindar’s mention of Epharmostos in *Olympian* 9.88–94, who, when forced to compete as a boy (*pais*) against men, managed to win by trickery or perhaps “feinting” moves (*doloi*).
- 34 See further the appendix to this chapter.
- 35 On the symposium as a site of maturation, see Murray (1983a), Murray (1983b), Murray (1982) and Bremmer (1990). On the role of heroic myth, see in particular Bremmer and also further discussion below in the final section of this chapter.
- 36 It is worth noting, too, that Hermaia are among the very few major festivals in honor of Hermes for which we have evidence; he was a god more frequently worshipped alongside other gods at their own festivals, or in smaller ways by private individuals.
- 37 The exception is the account of Dionysius Thrax in the second century BCE (apud *Anecdota Bekker* 2.752.10), which says Hermes stole the cattle of the Sun; by this time, however, we often find Apollo being identified with Helios.
- 38 Apollo’s role as a patron of youths, particularly in rituals of social transformation, has frequently been discussed; see, e.g., Graf (1993) 102–18, Versnel (1993) ch. 5, Pettersson (1992), Graf (1979), Burkert (1975). The Homeric *Hymn* itself reminds us of Apollo’s association with the latter role, when Hermes describes Apollo at line 375 as being in the “tender bloom of glorious youth.”
- 39 This mirroring also reflects broader cultic reality: in different parts of Greece, now Hermes and now Apollo was the preeminent patron of herdsmen. On Apollo and herds, see *Iliad* 21.446, Euripides *Alceste* 8, Callimachus *Hymn* 2.47, Apollonius of Rhodes 4.1218, Apollodorus *FGH* 244.96, Pausanias 7.20.3–4; cf. Jost (1985) 480–2 and Càssola (1975) 82–3.
- 40 For an excellent literary analysis of line 256 and its significance for the rest of the *Hymn*, see Harrell (1991), who identifies them as one variation of a formula used in other epic poetry to mark threats against the established order.
- 41 In agreement with Allen, Halliday and Sikes (1936) 318–19 and contra Radermacher (1931) 126, who suggests “schwach” for a translation of *oligos* in line 256 or, alternatively, suggests that it refers to the portrayal of souls as small anthropomorphic creatures. Càssola (1975) 531 leans towards the former of Radermacher’s suggestions.
- 42 Cf. Haft (1996) *passim*, who emphasizes the general reciprocity that exchange of gifts between raider and victim implies and its ability to forge bonds, rather than the significance of the particular gifts themselves. This emphasis leads her to suggest further (36), building on Herzfeld’s (1985) analysis of contemporary Cretan animal raids, that Hermes chose to steal from Apollo (as opposed to any other god) because Apollo, as a cowherd and thus a potential cow-thief himself, alone among the gods was capable of reciprocating by stealing cows from Hermes; this provided Hermes with a moral justification for his theft. I do not find anything in either the *Hymn to Hermes* or other ancient cattle-raid myths that supports this interpretation. For other analyses of the conflicted relationship between the two gods, see Clay (1989) 100–2, Kahn (1978) 159–64, Càssola (1975) 153, Graefe (1973) 515–26, Duchemin (1960), Brown (1947)

- passim*, Eitrem (1906) 248.
- 43 Brelich (1969) 30–5, Brelich (1959), Eliade (1958) 22–4, 29, 35, Van Gennep (1960) 82. See also the photographs of a Bassari initiation ceremony in which each initiate must do battle with an elder wearing a “Lukutu” mask: Beckwith and Fisher (1999) 1, 109–15.
 - 44 Depew (2000).
 - 45 Murray (1983a), Murray (1983b), Murray (1982); Bremmer (1990) esp. 136–8. The quotations in this paragraph are from Bremmer (1990) 138.
 - 46 Cf. Haft (1996) 43 and Clay (1989) 109 and 138; the former’s interpretation is similar to mine.
 - 47 In contrast to Kahn (1978) 53–5, I do not attach any importance to the fact that Hermes sacrifices on top of a fire built in a pit (*botbros*, 112) rather than on top of an altar. The scene is rustic; Hermes improvises as best he can. Cf. Burkert (1984) who warns that sacrifices do not always play by the “rules” that scholars have constructed for them, and Clay (1989) 118 who reminds us that “a mythological hymn does not resemble the text of a sacred law.”
 - 48 Long (1987) 58–62 and 154–59, Burkert (1984), Càssola (1975) 526 and Radermacher (1931) 98. Clay (1989) 119–27 takes a different approach, starting from the assumption that the scene represents a *dais* rather than a sacrifice in the strict sense. Authors who mention the Twelve Gods at Olympia include Pindar in *Olympian* 5.1–7, with scholia (some of which cite the late fifth-century historian Herodorus), cf. *Olympian* 10.43–50; Apollodorus 2.7.5; and Pausanias 5.14.4–10.
 - 49 Cf. Clay (1989) 117–23, who develops from this observation a different interpretation. However, cf. also Haft (1996) 38–9, who stresses not so much Hermes’ *resistance* to his desire to eat but rather the desire to eat itself. She interprets this in light of the contemporary Cretan use of the phrase “desire to eat meat” as a synonym for “desire to steal livestock” and from this suggests that his desire for meat is yet another signal that he has separated himself from Maia; in my opinion, this places too much emphasis – and too positive an emphasis – on the very desire that Hermes rejects. Kahn (1978) 41–73 simultaneously emphasizes the nature of sacrifice as a means of moving Hermes into the divine realm and (because she interprets it as an inverted sacrifice) as a practice that breeches divisions between mortals and gods and thus exemplifies Hermes’ role as mediator between realms; cf. Burkert (1984) 842, who rejects Kahn’s idea of the inverted sacrifice.
 - 50 Pausanias 6.7.10, who says this custom ended after a victor from Stymphalus named Dromeus (“The Runner”) introduced a diet of meat. For the date (484 BCE), see Moretti (1953) 188. Cf. Burkert (1983) 101–2.
 - 51 Contra Haft (1996) 39–40, who suggests that the offering to the gods mimics a practice attested in contemporary Crete, where a thief sometimes disguises his deed by serving the meat of the stolen cattle to the police or even to the man from whom he stole them.
 - 52 Contra Clay (1989) 118, who presumes the twelve are the twelve “Olympians” familiar from mythology handbooks. Radermacher (1931) 98 recognized the likelihood that they were the group I identify here, although he was troubled by the fact that Hermes thereby was including himself in the group. Allen, Halliday and Sikes (1936) 305 accept Radermacher’s surmise without further comment; Burkert (1984) agrees and Càssola (1975) 526 accepts that it was a local group. A complete list of the gods sharing the six altars at Olympia (in the order listed in ancient sources) is: Zeus and Poseidon, Hera and Athena, Hermes and Apollo, the Charites and Dionysus, Artemis and Alpheus, Cronus

- and Rhea. Sources for the twin altars and their gods are given in n. 48 above.
- 53 Depew (2000).
- 54 Graf (1993) 113–14 and Graf (1979).
- 55 Paus. 8.14.9–12, 8.16.1 and cf. Cic. *De natura deorum*. 3.22.56. Further on Hermes in Pheneus and in Arcadia more generally, Jost (1985) 28–35, 440–56.
- 56 *Et. Magn.* s.v. *Kullênios*, Pausanias 8.15.5, cf. Plutarch *Moralia* 557c. Jost (1985) 33, 489–91 dates the foundation of this cult to early times, certainly by the late sixth century, and notes that worship of Apollo Pythios was rare in Arcadia (found elsewhere only at Tegea and on Mt. Lycaeus).
- 57 There was also a sanctuary dedicated to Apollo in Pellene, where the Theoxenia were celebrated: Pausanias 7.27.4–6 and see further n. 27 above.
- 58 Graf (1993) 104–8.

WHO IN HELL IS HERACLES?

Dionysus' disastrous disguise in the *Frogs*

Radcliffe G. Edmonds III

Why, on his famous trip to the underworld in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, does Dionysus disguise himself as Heracles? Throughout the play, Dionysus presents a ridiculous spectacle, for he has combined the costume that marks his own identity, the effeminate yellow robe and tragic buskins, with a costume that marks the identity of the heroic Heracles, the lionskin and club. The sight is so ludicrous that Heracles cannot keep from laughing at it, and the contrast of the cowardly and weak Dionysus and his disguise as Heracles must have provided a running sight gag for the audience throughout the play. What motivates this disguise? A number of scholars, starting with Segal (1961) and most recently Lada-Richards (1999), have seen Dionysus' disguise as symbolic of a loss of his own identity: Dionysus is not himself, so he tries to be Heracles. Gradually, they argue, by an initiatory journey through the underworld, Dionysus sheds this identity of Heracles and wins a sense of his own true identity. These commentators explain Dionysus' achievement of a new identity through the familiar pattern of the initiation ritual, with its three-part rite of passage: separation, liminality, reaggregation. Dionysus' disguise represents his confusion about his old identity, an identity that is replaced by a new, more mature and authentic identity by the end of the play. Dionysus' new maturity allows him to be a fit judge of the poetic contest at the end of the play, thus resolving the concerns of scholars who see a radical discrepancy between the buffoonery of the first half of the play and the serious issues of the final poetic competition. As Segal puts it: "The central problem in the character of Dionysus is how the rather timorous and almost despicable figure of the first part of the play can serve as an arbiter in a contest of the gravest consequences at its end. Yet by the end of the parabasis, Dionysus has attained a certain dignity, and there is no question of his fitness."¹

I would argue, on the contrary, that the dignity and fitness of Dionysus are rather questionable, even at the end of the play, and that scholars have overlooked significant elements in order to make the play fit into the idea of a maturing "Spirit of Comedy". An interpretation that relies on the

maturation of Dionysus' character neglects the text and context of Aristophanes' play in favor of a metatheatrical idea of the "Spirit of Comedy" that means more to modern scholars of the comic genre than it could ever have meant to Aristophanes and his audience. The death of Dionysus' old self and the creation of a new personality through his journey to Hades do not in fact occur in Aristophanes' text, despite the attractiveness of this pattern for the modern scholar. The major problem with the ritual of initiation interpretations of the *Frogs* has been that scholars have distorted Aristophanes' text in order to fit the details into the pattern. Such interpretations obscure the real reasons why, in hell, Dionysus should disguise himself as Heracles.

Aristophanes, in having Dionysus pretend to be Heracles, is playing with the variety of depictions of Heracles familiar to his audience from the Greek mythic tradition. He uses Dionysus' and Xanthias' troubles with the identity of Heracles to comment (humorously, of course) upon the relations between citizen and slave in post-Arginousai Athens. The confusion over the identity of Heracles sets up Aristophanes' plea for the inclusion as citizens of all, from slave to noble, who serve the city in its time of crisis. Aristophanes creates comic confusion by playing with familiar aspects of the identity of Heracles in the traditional scenario of an identity test at the gates of Hades. Rather than having Dionysus disguise himself as Heracles to symbolize the Comic Spirit's loss of identity, Aristophanes uses the confusion in Dionysus' and Xanthias' changes of identity to blur the lines between citizen and slave, redefining the true citizen as the Athenian who serves the city nobly in its time of need.

The problem of the unity of the *Frogs*

The problem of the unity of the *Frogs* has been a major issue in the scholarship within the last hundred years, and much of the critical work on the play stems from the attempt to find an element that unifies the literary *agôn* with the rest of the play. Dionysus' quest to retrieve Euripides from the underworld has seemed disjointed from the great literary contest between Euripides and Aeschylus. Scholars have proposed various theories of revisions or hasty joinings of unrelated plot patterns.² In the last forty years, however, beginning with Segal's influential article, one solution has won increasing acceptance: the initiation of Dionysus. This argument, however, rests on a number of problematic bases, and this interpretation of the *Frogs* distorts or obscures a number of important elements within the play.

The initiatory interpretation is appealing, in the first place, because of the common equation of the *katabasis* story with a process of death and rebirth and the assumption that such a death and rebirth is always initiatory. As Eliade puts it: "Descending into Hades means to undergo 'initiatory death', the experience of which can establish a new mode of being."³ The descent to the underworld fits into Van Gennep's schema of the *rite de passage*, the three

part transition consisting of separation, liminality, and reaggregation.⁴ The deceased separates himself from the world of the living, goes through a liminal period in the realm of the dead, and is finally brought back into the normal world as a new person.

Such a pattern provides a coherent framework to unify a disjointed narrative, since the tripartite schema delineates a nice beginning, middle, and end that follow one another in logical sequence. The end result of such an initiatory sequence must be, in the logic of this argument, the creation of a new identity for the protagonist as he is reborn upon completing his passage through the realm of death. Hence, for these scholars, Dionysus progresses in the play toward a new and better definition of himself, abandoning the uncertain state in which he starts the play.⁵ For Segal, “Dionysus appears as the embodiment of the comic spirit seeking a stable definition of itself and its aims; and his search is presented primarily through the motifs of disguise and changeability.”⁶ This metatheatrical idea that Dionysus represents the “Spirit of Comedy” permits a further connection of the *katabasis* with the *agôn*, since Dionysus’ initiatory journey results in the true definition of Comedy, just as the *agôn* redefines the proper nature of Tragedy.

Against an initiation interpretation

However, the basic premises of this argument – the equation of *katabasis* with initiation, the idea that Dionysus gains a new identity, and the metatheatrical identification of Dionysus with the “Spirit of Comedy” – are all severely flawed, and the resulting argument, in all its incarnations from Segal (1961) to Lada-Richards (1999), presents a distorted picture of the character of Dionysus and his *katabasis* in the *Frogs*.

In the first place, despite the authority of Eliade, a descent into the underworld is by no means necessarily an initiation. Initiation rituals do frequently make use of the imagery of death and rebirth (although not as frequently as has sometimes been claimed⁷), and the process of initiation is sometimes imagined or enacted as a journey through the realm of the dead. However, the pattern of action in which the protagonist leaves one status and gains a new status is not always connected with the journey to the realm of the dead, but other imagery (such as bathing or signs of physical maturation) may be used to express the same pattern of passage. Moreover, while a ritual of initiation may make use of the traditional mythic motifs associated with the journey to the realm of the dead to communicate the idea of a change in status for the initiand, the use of those motifs is hardly confined to initiatory ritual nor even to narratives in which a death and rebirth is experienced by the protagonist.⁸ Mythic narratives and rituals, in short, draw upon the same set of traditional images and patterns of action to convey their ideas, but the specific meaning of a given traditional pattern or image cannot be divorced from the way in which it is deployed within

the narrative or ritual. A *katabasis* does not necessarily imply an initiation nor an initiation a *katabasis*.

Once we discard the presumption that a *katabasis* in the *Frogs* necessarily entails some kind of initiation and acquisition of a new identity for Dionysus, we can easily see as circular the arguments that Dionysus matures into his new identity in the course of the play. As a number of scholars have pointed out, characters in Aristophanic comedy do not generally develop in the same way that characters in modern drama do.⁹ Lada-Richards, while acknowledging this general rule, pleads an exception in the case of the *Frogs*:

The *Frogs* may be treated in a special way, as it is the play's discourse itself which contains the notion of development: reflecting the sequence of an initiation, it implicates the initiand/actor in the change that a *myesis* entails. In other words, being a function of this play's action, Dionysus' character inevitably evolves.¹⁰

That is to say, the *Frogs* is an initiation of Dionysus because his character develops, and the character of Dionysus must develop, despite evidence to the contrary, because the *Frogs* is an initiation sequence – full circle.

The evidence to the contrary is not just in the general nature of Aristophanic characters, but in the specific character of Dionysus of the *Frogs*. Despite Segal's claim that Dionysus has changed from "the rather timorous and almost despicable figure of the first part of the play" to a worthy judge of a "contest with the gravest consequences," Dionysus remains an undignified buffoon throughout the literary contest, cracking rude jokes and relieving the seriousness of the conflict with silly remarks.¹¹ As for his fitness to judge the contest, Dionysus himself admits in response to one of Euripides' subtle distinctions, "I have no idea what you're talking about!"¹² Both Aeschylus and Euripides abuse him repeatedly for his stupidity and lack of good dramatic taste.¹³ While a few of his critiques have been judged by commentators to be serious or even legitimate (and the commentators do not agree on which these are),¹⁴ only the fact that he makes the "right" choice at the end, choosing Aeschylus on the grounds that he will be more help to the city, seems to qualify Dionysus for consideration as a "serious" judge. The character of Dionysus, then, does not mature through the play; he retains his crude nature and comic outlook even through the literary *agôn*.

Not only does Dionysus not gain a new identity through an initiation, but he never loses his identity in the first place, despite his concealment or denial of his own identity in the first part of the play. Segal bases his argument about Dionysus seeking his own identity upon the choruses' failure to recognize Dionysus and upon the disguised Dionysus' failure to respond to their hymns. For Segal, Dionysus fails to respond because he "has not yet attained the unified conception of himself which he is seeking."¹⁵ Aristophanes, however, has Dionysus conceal his identity because he wishes to benefit from

the identity of Heracles, not because he is having an identity crisis. Dionysus indeed remains aware of his own identity, even though he does not acknowledge the chorus' hymns to Iacchos and Dionysus Nyseios. Such an acknowledgement would disrupt his disguise and wreck his plans, not to mention disrupting the celebrations of the chorus.¹⁶ When Dionysus has some reason to acknowledge his own identity, as when he appeals to his priest in the front row of the theatre to save him from the monstrous Empousa (297), he has no trouble doing so. While he hopes to have people believe that he has the *lema* as well as the *schema* of Heracles, he never is himself so deceived or lost in his play-acting as to believe that he actually is someone other than himself.

For some scholars, the mere fact that Dionysus adopts a disguise in his *katabasis* points to his loss of identity.¹⁷ By this argument, Dionysus disguises himself as Heracles as part of the attempt to redefine his identity; by borrowing the attributes of Heracles, Dionysus is separating himself from his own former attributes. The attributes of Dionysus and Heracles are then linked to traits of the genre of Comedy, and Dionysus' shift between them are seen as a redefinition, not just of his own identity, but of the genre of Comedy itself.

To be sure, the *Frogs* is in many ways a metatheatrical play, and the sight of an actor playing a role that is playing a role would undoubtedly have added to the humorous reflection upon the theatrical experience. Nevertheless, it is important to distinguish between types of metatheatricality at work. Reading Dionysus as a personification of the Comic Spirit, of the genre of Old Comedy, as Segal and others do, produces an anachronistic reading with significance only to the modern scholar of literary genres. Aristophanes' personification of a style of poetry produces, not a Dionysus whose maturing character reflects the development of a genre, but the sultry Muse of Euripides (1306–8, 1325–8), whose obscene talents reflect the versatility and superficial allure of Euripides' verse. I would argue that Aristophanes' metatheatricality manifests itself in direct critiques of his competitors and, indeed, in the contest of Aeschylus and Euripides, rather than in a quest by the "Spirit of Comedy" to define a new role for comedy within Greek literature. While modern scholars may see the *Frogs* as the last example of the genre of Old Comedy, bearing within it the seeds of Middle and New Comedy, such an anachronistic perspective neither illuminates the ideas that Aristophanes was trying to convey by his manipulations of myth, nor any meaning that his audience might have understood from his play.¹⁸

Ritual distortion

The initiatory interpretations of the *Frogs* too often distort the text of the play in the attempt to fit the details into the pattern. A ritual makes use of traditional mythic elements in a different way than a narrative, following

different patterns and logic. The presumption of a pattern of initiation in the play causes the commentators to go to great lengths to squeeze the details of the plot into a Van Gennepian sequence of separation, liminality, and reaggregation. Moreover, the presumption of character development for Dionysus also causes scholars to distort the descriptions of Dionysus' behavior in the text to fit in with whatever kind of development they suppose. Both kinds of distortions obscure the subtle use of the traditional mythic motifs and patterns that Aristophanes does make in the *Frogs*.

By insisting that Dionysus becomes a morally worthy judge of the literary contest, scholars have ignored or distorted his buffoonery in the final scenes, so that even his crudest and stupidest comments are seen as the utterances of a sublimely fresh and pure mind.¹⁹ Dionysus' gibes about poets and their works are no more serious and profound at the end of the play than they are at the beginning. Indeed, the presumption of development has often caused more weight to be placed on Dionysus' comments in the final scenes at the expense of attention to his critiques in the opening scenes of the play.

In the attempt to portray Dionysus' initiation through his *katabasis*, scholars have charted the progress of his character along a number of axes: Dionysiac, Heracleian, Aeschylean, and Euripidean. Unfortunately, this approach yields little insight, for these scholars agree neither on where Dionysus begins his progress nor where he ends.²⁰ Lada-Richards, drawing on her predecessors, plays it all ways at once and describes in detail the ways in which Dionysus in the *Frogs* at different points resembles both Aeschylus and Euripides, as well as traditional mythic representations of both Heracles and Dionysus. While she plumbs the depths and richness of the traditions available to Aristophanes' audience excellently, in her attempts to align motifs with different aspects of the traditional picture of Dionysus, Lada-Richards neglects the arrangement and deployment of those motifs.²¹ She never argues how the audience would shift its interpretation of the character to choose among the axes of Heracleian and Dionysiac, Euripidean and Aeschylean, individual and civic. To make such choices, the audience would have to be guided by Aristophanes' specific manipulations of the mythic tradition within the play, what he does with the familiar elements of Heracles' gluttony and strength or of Dionysus' connection with the theatre and wine. Although Lada-Richards uncovers the mythic resonances of Aristophanes' images more thoroughly than her predecessors, like them she never extends her analysis to the level of Aristophanes' specific manipulations of familiar mythic elements.

Not only are Aristophanes' specific manipulations of the mythic tradition obscured by the distortion of the character of Dionysus to fit the imagined development of his character, but the whole line of the plot is likewise twisted to fit within the pattern of an initiation ritual.²² Moorton, for example, attempts to apply Van Gennep's pattern to the end of the play: "Of the three rites required, the rite of separation is fully portrayed in the *Frogs*, the rite of

transition is anticipated, and the rite of incorporation into Athens is left to our imagination.”²³ Which is to say that, while a motif of separation is present in the closing ode, the other two parts are not actually present, but can be imagined if the reader assumes that Van Gennep’s pattern is present. Such an analysis brings no insight into the structure of the play, but merely imposes the modern scholarly analytic pattern on top of it.

Other scholars have attempted to fit the whole plot sequence of the *Frogs* into the sections of a specific initiatory ritual. Bowie, in particular, links various pieces of the plot with sections of the Eleusinian mysteries.²⁴

Taking the play as a whole, we can see a pattern of mystic initiation. In the first part, there are *prorrhesis*, the “journey” and tribulation culminating in the procession of the Mystae, *gephurismos*, arrival and *pannuchis*, things which even the uninitiated could know and partake in; and in the second part, there are the *thronosis*, further “trials”, attainment of knowledge and rebirth. The god regains his identity, as the *mustes* underwent the process of the dissolution of his personality and the creation of a new one.

The problem with Bowie’s interpretation lies not in his reference to myth and ritual, even specifically to the Eleusinian Mysteries, as a means of understanding the messages of Aristophanes, but rather in his use of the structure of the Eleusinian ritual as a rigid frame into which he attempts to fit the pieces of the play. While some elements in the play are certainly references to specific features of the Mysteries, e.g. the *prorrhesis* (the formal pronouncement banning certain people from the rites) and the long road from Athens, not every part of the Mysteries is reproduced, nor can every part of the play be fitted into its structure. Too often, Bowie forces the details of the text into the pattern of the Eleusinian ritual, creating distortions of meaning.

The comic abuse of prominent figures, for example, does not correspond specifically with the ritual *gephurismos* in the Eleusinian festival. Although both the chorus’ lampoons and the *gephurismos* involve obscene abuse directed at prominent Athenians, such abuse is a part of many rituals and occasions within the Athenian festival year, the comic competitions not the least of them. Whereas the *gephurismos*, the ritual abuse heaped on the procession as it crossed the bridge over the Cephissus into the territory of Eleusis, plays an important transitional role in the structure of the Eleusinian festival, the various choral songs of abuse play no such role in the *Frogs*, recalling rather the sort of licensed scurrility at the Thesmophoria or the Haloa, carnivalesque settings in which transgressions of the social norms are given a controlled expression.²⁵ To extrapolate the structural function of the choral abuse from the structural function of the *gephurismos* on the basis of the similarity of their content distorts the structure of the play, forcing it into the semblance of an initiation for Dionysus.

Bowie's identification of *thronosis* (the ritual enthronement of the initiate) and of generic ritual ordeals in the *Frogs* creates the same problems. Bowie unconvincingly attempts to relate the silence and immobility of the characters in Aeschylus' prologues to what he calls the *thronosis* ritual, but the allusion in the literary contest to someone sitting silently does not even fit into the place of the so-called *thronosis* in the sequence of the initiation as Bowie lays it out.²⁶ Bowie also tries to link the whipping contest, in which Dionysus and Xanthias try to avoid indicating that they are suffering pain, to the ritual requirement of silence for the Mysteries.²⁷ However, not only is the silence in the Mysteries connected with the awe at the moment of revelation (and secondarily with the importance of not revealing the Mysteries to the uninitiate) rather than with keeping silent under torture, but, in fact, neither Dionysus nor Xanthias ever actually keep silent; they are continually cracking jokes or trying to disguise their exclamations of pain as some other outburst. Moreover, the whipping ordeal, whether imagined as an allusion to the silence of the initiates at Eleusis or as a general ritual ordeal, comes *after* the encounter with the festival of the blessed initiates, instead of being a necessary step on the way to that final reward.²⁸

Despite the claim that Aristophanes is making use of the pattern of initiation from the Eleusinian Mysteries, the motifs identified as Eleusinian do not, in fact, fit into the sequence of events in the Eleusinian rituals or an initiation ritual as it is imagined in general. Lada-Richards argues, reasonably enough, that "a ritual sequence encapsulated in a work of art is not expected to constitute an accurate reflection of the actual ceremony itself," since an accurate reproduction is not the purpose of the use of the elements.²⁹ However, if it is specifically the *sequence* of the ritual, the progression from uninitiated to initiated, that is significant, as those who want to see an initiation of Dionysus claim, then that sequence, at least, the pattern of actions involved, must be reproduced recognizably, even if the details are altered wildly and comically. If the temporal and logical sequence of action is not, in fact, preserved or pointedly rearranged, then the traditional and familiar motifs that recall the Eleusinian Mysteries for Aristophanes' audience must have some other resonance, a resonance that is obscured by the attempt to fit it into a pattern of initiation for Dionysus.

Both Bowie and Lada-Richards uncover a wide range of these resonances, pointing to the range of significances that these familiar motifs and ideas would have had for Aristophanes' audience. However, their attempts to fit all these elements into the initiatory pattern of action cause them to miss the full depth and richness of Aristophanes' use of these elements. The tradition on which Aristophanes draws includes both the many mythic tellings of journeys to the otherworld and the rituals associated with the Eleusinian Mysteries. Rituals are performances composed of a number of traditional actions set in a sequence that is itself traditional.³⁰ Like the elements of a myth, therefore, the elements and patterns of action of a ritual have a significance to their audience whose scope is determined by the range of meanings evoked by

the familiar signs and limited by the context in which they are arranged.³¹ The Eleusinian Mysteries are a particularly evocative symbol for the life of the Athenian polis, since the ritual performance of the Mysteries was a way for the city to define its borders of territory, of community, and of influence.

As recent studies have shown, Eleusis was a part of the Athenian polis from its formation,³² and the sanctuary at Eleusis served as an important marker of the boundaries of Athens, both spatially and ideologically.³³ A large portion of the Athenian population participated in the Mysteries, which were open not only to adult, male citizens but also to groups of Athenians excluded from other civic institutions – women, metics, and slaves. Participation in the Mysteries cut across political faction as well as the barriers of gender and citizenship, so a group of initiates presented a very good way for Aristophanes to represent the group of Athenians, united in their celebration of a festival.³⁴ The chorus of initiates redefine this united group of true Athenians in their comic *prorrhesis* (354–71), explicitly excluding as barbarians and polluted criminals certain Athenians whom Aristophanes sees as destructive to the city, while, in the *parabasis* (674–737), they urge the city to welcome back to the fold the oligarchs involved in the revolution of 411.

In the *Frogs*, however, Aristophanes depicts the chorus of initiates in the realm of the dead, the underworld, because in the spring of 405 the Athens of the real world was fraught with disunity and faction, deprived of much of her authority over other Greek states, and powerless even to conduct her festival of the Mysteries. Dionysus goes on a quest to the realm of the dead to bring back a fertile poet to an impotent Athens, venturing into a world where everything is different and strange to bring change to the familiar world. The contrasts between the realms of the living and the dead provide a means by which Aristophanes can renegotiate the boundaries of the society, excluding those whom he sees as destructive to the city and recalling those whom the city needs to be whole.

Redefining Athenians

Aristophanes comically plays off the expectations of his audience familiar with traditional myths and rituals to set up these redefinitions of his society. Dionysus' disguise as Heracles is one of Aristophanes' most fruitful mythic manipulations. Not only does he make use of that old familiar pattern of action, the descent into the underworld with its traditional test of identity at the gates, but he comically exploits the variety of imagery and ideas associated with Heracles to create a situation in which Dionysus is trapped between the conflicting consequences of the contradictory associations of the character he has adopted.

Aristophanes' *Frogs* focuses not on Dionysus' passage from immaturity to maturity, but on his *katabasis*, his quest to return to the world of the living with a poet from the world of the dead, to save Athens from its dearth of

cultural life. No more good poets remain in the city of Athens, and Dionysus wants to bring a clever (*dexios*) poet to fill the gap in Athenian life.³⁵ When Dionysus rates the living poets unfavorably in comparison to the dead Euripides and announces his intent to seek a *gonimos* (creative or perhaps “ballsy”) poet in the land of the dead, Aristophanes is playing off the traditional pattern of action of descent to the underworld to bring back wisdom beyond the mortal world.³⁶ Of course, speaking of the fertility of a dead man, coupled with Heracles’ insinuations of necrophilia,³⁷ flavors the wisdom quest of the Odyssean type with a taste of the erotic pursuit of Orpheus or even Peirithoos and Theseus. Still, the objective of bringing back wisdom to the city is implicit from the beginning in Dionysus’ critique of the living tragic poets and even in his disparagement of Aristophanes’ rival comedians. Dionysus’ desire for Euripides is never a purely personal or aesthetic longing, but, even at the beginning of the play, the absence of Euripides has a larger dimension. As Dover points out, *dexios* carries the sense of wise and understanding, as well as creative and clever,³⁸ and Euripides’ poetic creativity could be seen, not simply as clever, but as literally life-saving. Plutarch tells how some Athenian survivors of the Sicilian disaster won food and drink or even release from slavery by reciting bits of Euripides’ poetry to their Syracusan captors.³⁹ The clever poetry of the tragedian can indeed bring salvation to Athenians. Although specific references to “saving” the city do not come until later in the play, Dionysus intends the return of a *dexios* poet to the city to bring relief to the current conditions.⁴⁰

Dionysus’ disguise as Heracles is, first and foremost, his strategy for overcoming the perils of the journey to the realm of the dead to accomplish his quest. Because of Heracles’ previous experience in the journey to bring back Cerberus, Dionysus asks Heracles to provide him with information about guest-friends on whom he can make claims during his journey.⁴¹ Although Dionysus perhaps has some hopes of scaring off potential hazards on the road with the fierce appearance of Heracles, he is primarily interested in the benefits that Heracles’ hospitality relations could provide when he reaches the halls of Hades.⁴² Dionysus chooses to claim the identity of Heracles on his journey because he wants to benefit from the guest-friend relations that Heracles had created on his journey, and the house of Hades is where those relations are first tested, with comically catastrophic consequences.

Aristophanes plays with the variety of traditional stories about Heracles’ descent that would have been familiar to his audience to conjure up both a positive and a negative response to Heracles’ previous visit among the denizens of Hades whom Dionysus encounters. On the one hand, Heracles’ identity as an initiate in the Eleusinian Mysteries seems to be the key to the favorable reception he receives in some versions of his quest for Cerberus. As the prototypical Eleusinian initiate (and thus truly a worthy Athenian), Heracles has established a special relationship with Persephone and is particularly welcome in her realm.⁴³ On the other hand, however, in other

traditional versions, Heracles relies on his standard solution for most of the situations he encounters in his labors – violence. As the violent abductor of Cerberus, Heracles has angered the inhabitants of Hades by his violation of their realm, and Aristophanes thus can posit a hostile reception for Heracles at his next appearance. Aristophanes humorously switches back and forth between these two alternative receptions of Heracles in the scene before the gates, and Dionysus miserably fails to adapt himself to the situations by switching roles with Xanthias. Aristophanes uses these reversals of roles between Heracles and Dionysus, and between master and slave, to redefine the truly worthy and heroic citizen of Athens.

The identity of Heracles brings Dionysus only negative reactions from the inhabitants of the underworld when he expects positive ones, but Xanthias disguised as Heracles gets the positive reactions Dionysus had planned upon. Throughout this scene, Aristophanes assumes knowledge of the tales of Heracles' *katabasis* to set up all of the comic reversals. The hostile reaction of the doorkeeper is provoked by Heracles' theft of the dog, the very purpose of his traditional journey. Dionysus is also threatened with prosecution by the two innkeepers, since Heracles, the violent glutton, abused the hospitality of the innkeepers and stole their food.⁴⁴ Dionysus, hoping to reap the rewards of Heracles' last visit by claiming his identity, must instead pay the penalty for the relations Heracles established.

When Dionysus tries to escape the negative consequences of the Heracleian identity by passing off the disguise to Xanthias, Herakleioxanthias reaps the very rewards of being Heracles that Dionysus had wanted. Playing with the tradition, in earlier tellings, that Heracles had sacrificed a whole ox during his visit to the underworld, Aristophanes has a kitchen slave come out to invite "Heracles" in to another feast of ox, along with a whole catalogue of delights calculated to attract the hero, who was notorious as a glutton for food and sex.⁴⁵

Dionysus, the free man, behaves with the utmost cowardice throughout all these encounters, soiling himself with fright at the idea of actually having to live up to the heroic identity he assumed.⁴⁶ He abases himself before his slave, Xanthias, pleading with him and promising to let himself be beaten like a slave without complaint if he tries to take the role of Heracles back. The chorus comments that his attempts to assume the identity that will bring the most reward at any given moment and his ability to wriggle out of any role that has negative consequences are like the famed skills of the politician Theramenes.⁴⁷ Theramenes and Dionysus are accused (534–48) of not staying with a single form (*schema*), but always shifting to the softer side. Xanthias, on the other hand, though he is a slave and a mortal (531, cp. 583), has the courage (*lema*) that goes along with the form and appearance (*schema*) of Heracles.⁴⁸ Although the chorus threatens that, if Xanthias does not live up to the part, he will lose his heroic identity and its privileges and become a slave carrying the baggage once more, Xanthias plays his part as Heracles well,

borrowing the hero's tactic of violence to hold off the men coming to punish him for stealing Cerberus (607). However, his adoption of Heracleian violence is only temporary; he evades the consequences of his Heracleian identity by exploiting instead the consequences of Dionysus' adoption of slave identity and transferring the violent retributions to him. This twist transforms the test of identity from the question of Heracles and the consequences of his identity to one of the identity of slave and master.

Xanthias' maneuver leads to the final test of identity at the gates of Hades, the test by whipping. While this whipping might have had resonances from various rituals familiar to Aristophanes' audience, whipping is a punishment appropriate for a slave, and the test is to determine which of the two is a slave and which a god.⁴⁹ Comically, both Xanthias and Dionysus manage to conceal the pain they feel in the whipping contest, blurring the lines between master and slave even further. Aristophanes finally tops off the slapstick humor of the beating contest by making all these tests needless in the face of the real test of identity, a traditional confrontation with Persephone and Pluto that determines the fate of the traveller to the underworld.⁵⁰ Dionysus' attempts to disguise his identity bring him nothing but comic trouble, trouble Aristophanes quickly dismisses when he wants to move on to other jokes.

Xanthias, on the other hand, after proving himself brave and heroic when dressed as Heracles, is relegated to the outside with the other slaves, who fear that the affairs of their masters will only result in further beatings for them (812–13). Aristophanes, however, makes fun of the distinctions drawn between the slavish slaves and the noble nobles in the discussion between the doorkeeper and Xanthias about Dionysus. "By Zeus the Saviour, quite the gentleman your master is," says the doorkeeper, echoing the term (*gennadas*) that both he himself and Dionysus have previously applied to Xanthias.⁵¹ Xanthias, however, is quick to put Dionysus in his proper place with his own definition of what it means to be a "gentleman",⁵² someone who knows nothing but personal pleasures, sex, and drinking. This exchange, following right on the heels of the chorus' *parabasis* advice about choosing the noble and good to be leaders of the city (719, 728, 734), puts the *parabasis* in the perspective, as it were, of the post-Arginousai Athens. The freeing of the slaves who fought in the battle demonstrated that even slaves might prove themselves worthy of the city, whereas the debacle of the generals and their trial proved that the leaders of the city were not always the most noble. As Bowie suggests, "The relationship between Dionysus and Xanthias in the play thus provides an articulation of the relations between citizens and non-citizens in the state."⁵³ However, Aristophanes is primarily concerned with defining who is worthy to be counted among the members of the Athenian polis in its time of trial, and his concern for the slaves without citizens' rights is overshadowed by his concern for the disenfranchised citizens whom he thinks are essential to the survival of the city and by his contempt for the leaders of the people whom

he thinks have shown themselves to be no true citizens of the city by their self-serving behavior.⁵⁴

In the *parabasis* (674–737), Aristophanes calls for the city to put aside its factional squabbling and to unite behind the leadership of the noble families. The criterion for a true member of the Athenian family, however, must be the willingness to serve the needs of the polis, specifically in the navy that is Athens' last military resource. The test of naval combat can prove even slaves worthy of citizenship, as it did at Arginousai, and naval service is a theme that recurs throughout the *Frogs*, from Dionysus' laughable rowing lesson to Aeschylus' grim lion metaphor. The importance of naval service serves as the crucial test in the contest between Aeschylus and Euripides at the end of the play. Aeschylus uses the metaphor of a lion cub he had applied to Helen in his *Agamemnon* to answer Dionysus' question about Alcibiades, saying that if the state has reared such a dangerous creature, its best hope is to do good seaman's service to his ways. Aeschylus uses a verb (*hyperetein*, 1432) that means to serve as a rower under the command of, a clear reminder of the importance of naval service throughout the play as well as an allusion to Alcibiades' brilliant successes as a naval commander, since Alcibiades' naval victory at Cyzicus in 410 even provoked an offer of peace from the Spartans. Earlier in the play, by having Charon bar any slave not freed by fighting at Arginousai and by making Dionysus do his own rowing instead of merely being carried by Charon, Aristophanes redraws the boundaries of the worthy Athenian.⁵⁵ What good Athenians, slave or free, noble or poor, must do is serve in the navy, keeping the city afloat by pulling their own oars. Aristophanes therefore introduces the chorus of *Frogs*, whose swan song serves as a rowing chant to help Dionysus learn to row like a good citizen. Aristophanes is happy to elide the boundaries between master and slave, between ally and kinsman, if by doing so Athens can unite itself and be saved. The *parabasis* (674–737) includes a special plea for the oligarchs disenfranchised in the revolt of 411. If fighting in sea battles is worthy proof of good citizens, then surely, pleads the chorus, these oligarchs deserve to be reconsidered if they can serve their city in its time of need.⁵⁶

Conclusion

Dionysus' disastrous disguise as Heracles, then, does not signal the character's transformation through an initiatory descent into the underworld. Rather, the disguise provides Aristophanes with a number of opportunities to manipulate traditional mythic motifs and patterns to renegotiate the boundaries of the categories that define Athenian society. Aristophanes plays with elements familiar to his audience from traditional myths and rituals, humorously twisting the details to evoke familiar resonances with his own peculiar ring to them. Aristophanes breaks down some of the familiar categories of master and slave, citizen and non-citizen, familiar and strange, along with the

difference between the world of the living and the realm of the dead. By dissolving the familiar distinctions, Aristophanes opens the space to create his own definitions of what is a worthy member of the Athenian polis and what the city needs to rescue her from the perilous seas in which she sails.

Notes

- 1 Segal (1961) 208.
- 2 Rogers (1919) xvi, claims of the *katabasis*: “It can hardly be said to be woven into the texture of the play at all; it is but loosely tacked on, and the stitches by which it is attached to the main fabric are quite visible to a careful observer.” Russo (1966) 1–13 and (1994) esp. 206–8 argues that the fact that no reference is made to saving the city in the first part of the play proves that the story was radically revised and that the idea of bringing a poet back was not part of the original concept of the play. Hooker (1980) 169–82 also believes that the *katabasis* element is a last minute addition, worked in only after Aristophanes had obtained and read a copy of Euripides’ posthumously released work, the *Bacchae*. I agree, however, with Dover (1993) 9: “It is hard on a dramatist if his most striking and successful innovation in plot structure is to be treated by posterity, because his other plots are not so good, as the unhappy consequence of hasty revision.”
- 3 Eliade (1972) 27. See also Eliade (1958) 62: “From one point of view, we may say that all these myths and sagas have an initiatory structure; to descend into Hell alive, confront its monsters and demons, is to undergo an initiatory ordeal.” Thiery (1986) 305 discusses the initiation pattern he sees in Aristophanes as a cultural universal: “L’essentiel n’est pas pour nous attribuer une origine plus ou moins précise à cette notion d’initiation chez Aristophane, mais de constater que dans toutes les religions, les littératures et les civilisations, quels qu’en soient l’époque ou le niveau, la notion d’initiation est ancrée dans l’esprit humain, d’autant plus qu’elle répond toujours à un même scénario dont seuls les noms et les détails varient.”
- 4 Van Gennep (1960). Jane Harrison (1912) 19–20 was among the first to make use of Van Gennep (originally published 1909) to understand myths of death and rebirth as initiatory. Classicists, however, have for the most part still not availed themselves of more nuanced anthropological theories of initiation, preferring the simple Aristotelian schema of Van Gennep. Indeed, the more complicated pictures of liminality provided by Turner and others would not serve the desired function of unification of the narrative, so they are, for the most part, ignored.
- 5 For Whitman (1971) 236: “In the light of the deaths of Sophocles and Euripides, comedy puts on the buskin of high seriousness and the club and lion skin of heroic self-search, and undertakes the quest to recover poetic and political virility.” Segal (1961) 208 notes the references to various aspects of the deity Dionysus throughout the play and sees the journey through the underworld as a gradual quest for self-awareness by Dionysus.
- 6 Segal (1961) 211. Contrast the assessment of Stanford (1983) xxix: “So supple, fickle, wayward, panicky, opportunistic, and unscrupulous is he that he rather resembles the oil which helps to blend a salad or lubricate a machine, than any solid substance.”
- 7 See Barry and Schlegel (1980) 277–88.
- 8 For example Lada-Richards (1999) 57 claims: “ritual liminality is a period deeply impregnated with the imagery of death”, but she makes no argument to show that the

imagery of death in many circumstances of ritual liminality is more than a particularly useful set of images in the context, neither that it appears only in *ritual* liminality (which it obviously does not) nor that ritual liminality always and exclusively makes use of the imagery of death.

- 9 See Dover (1972) 59–65 on Aristophanic characters in general and (1993) 42 on Dionysus of the *Frogs* in particular, and Silk (1990) esp. 153–65, who contrasts the “realist” technique of modern drama with what he terms an “imagist” technique for Aristophanic theatre, whereby the character is represented through a series of images that do not connect in the same manner as a realist depiction of the development of a character. He suggests that character change occurs rather through inversions and reversals than through a steady process of maturation (170–1). Bowie (see n. 24 below) also comments on the lack of development of Aristophanic characters, although he strangely suspends this idea in his analysis of the *Frogs*.
- 10 Lada-Richards (1999) 217.
- 11 Dover (1993) notes at 980–91, 1074–5, 1089–98, 1149, 1279–80, and 1308, that Dionysus’ responses are often coarse or bathetic.
- 12 1169.
- 13 Both accuse him of talking nonsense, 1136 and 1197, and they abuse his stupidity in 917–18, 933, and 1160. Whatever Aeschylus means in 1150, it is clearly not complimentary to Dionysus’ taste and good judgement.
- 14 Segal (1961) 214–15 claims that Dionysus is a “fair and impartial judge” simply because he cracks jokes about both poets, but his evenhandedness hardly implies that he is serious. He seems to take Dionysus’ calls for Aeschylus to break his silence or restrain his anger or for Euripides to stop babbling (832, 835, 844ff.) as serious, well-intentioned advice, and he claims that Dionysus “interjects his own newly gained conception of the dignity of poetry” when he tells the tragedians not to quarrel like market women (857–8). Higgins (1977) 71 also thinks that some of Dionysus’ advice (e.g. 835, 844, 855–6, 1132–3, and 1227–8) is an attempt “to direct the debate along sensible lines.” On the other hand Vaio (1985) 95 sees as serious only Dionysus’ recommendations that Aeschylus be beaten for making the Thebans too martial (1023) and that a poet be put to death for corrupting the citizens (despite the fact, noted already by the scholiasts, that these poets are already dead).
- 15 Segal (1961) 213. Compare Thiery’s idea (1986) 317, that Dionysus does not realize that he is the Iacchos hymned by both choruses because, “la perte de son identité de Dionysus lui fait perdre en même temps celle de Iacchos.”
- 16 Dover (1993) 40 comments: “The initiates do not recognize Dionysus as their Iakchos, nor does he say anything to suggest that he regards them as invoking himself. Any such recognition would have been impossible to reconcile with the humor of the scenes in 460–673, and in the construction of a comedy humorous effect takes precedence.” The echoes of Athenian festivals in these passages, especially those concerned with Dionysus, may well be, as Segal argues, part of Aristophanes’ attempt to rebuild the communal solidarity of the Athenian audience through reminders of their communal religious tradition. Aristophanes makes such a use of ritual imagery above all in his borrowing of Eleusinian elements in the *Frogs*, but these reminders do not require a framework of Dionysus’ initiation to be effective.
- 17 As Whitman (1971) 236 says: “Dionysus is a hybrid whose multiple guises indicate not the possession of secret and magical keys, but rather uncertainty as to who he is.” For

Segal (1961) 213, this identity crisis is occasioned by the historical situation of Athens: "The breakdown of the communal solidarity which the battle of Arginusae and its aftermath exposed requires drastic measures and the god of Comedy must strip himself of his previous identity in order to arrive at a positive conception of himself that will meet the new demands put upon him."

- 18 Whatever its significance to the modern scholars of the genre of comedy, Aristophanes' utterance, his play, had meaning to his audience, a meaning that, while it can never be entirely recovered, can be at least partially reconstructed by an examination of the context in which the text occurs. Such a perspective can uncover the range of meanings that Aristophanes and his fellow Athenians might have found in the play, whereas the anachronistic perspective of Segal, however fascinating the ideas it may generate, cannot locate the principles by which Aristophanes structured his drama. David Brooks Dodd raises a similar question in his essay in this volume for the meaning of the patterns of prehistoric rituals within traditional stories. If the meaning of the pattern is read as an indicator of the prehistoric ritual, the implicit or explicit meaning communicated by the story teller to his audience is lost or obscured.
- 19 Vaio (1985) 93 criticizes such a reading: "In place of Aristophanes' protagonist, a genial but cowardly aesthete, there emerges a Dionisoparsifal, virtually an antique clone of Wagner's hero. Gone is the jovial jokesmith who uses Aeschylus' exposition of the true nature of dramatic art as the foil for his clownish wit. He is wholly submerged into a character of deep seriousness that develops inwardly from the shallow aesthete of the opening scenes to the perfect wisdom and understanding of the final exaltation." Compare Whitman (1971) 244: "And it is this which Dionysus is doing in the *Frogs*. He seeks to extract from the boundless world of death the true poet, and to do so he must penetrate and pass beyond the infinite shiftingness and changeability of the phenomenal world, transcend the Many and find the One."
- 20 For Segal (1961) 212 Dionysus is transcending the buffoonish treatment of Old Comedy: "In the descent to Hades Dionysus loses something of his traditional identity: he is, in a sense, purged of the mere buffoonery which belongs to Xanthias and Heracles and to the treatment of Dionysus in Old Comedy." On the other hand, Padilla (1992) 360 sees Dionysus' development as a move from Euripidean sophistic to good, old-fashioned comedy: "his encounter with the Heracleian axis "re-educates" him by prompting him to take up a more normative Old Comedy role: he abandons his "sophistic decadence" in favor of a heroic parody that maintains conservative civic values." For Reckford (1987) Dionysus also ultimately affirms his Old Comedy nature through his switch from Euripides to Aeschylus, even as Old Comedy is about to vanish forever into New Comedy.
- 21 For example, she claims (1999) 209, that Dionysus' movement from savage Dionysiac attributes to more civic and Heracleian ones is shown by his preference for the symposiastic delights of Persephone's hospitality over the wild sparagmos threatened by the doorkeeper: "The dramatized clash between Dionysus' aversion to the gruesome picture of a 'bacchic'-like dismemberment (479ff.) and his strong attraction to the prospect of a sacrificial banquet (522ff.) qualifies for his initiatory dissociation from the wild and his alignment with the tame and civilized side of his own mythical and cultic personality." But Dionysus' preference for the pleasures of food and sex over the pains of being ripped apart by savage eels has nothing to do with some deep transformation of his character. If one really wants to look for cultural patterns underlying his choice, the

- general Greek bias for doing (*pinein kai binein* in this case) over suffering should be sufficient in this case. If Dionysus were choosing the pleasures of the symposium over a wild chase, hunting down someone *else*, the choice might have some meaning.
- 22 The eagerness with which commentators stretch the details of the text into the ritual patterns of separation, transition, and incorporation is matched only by the eagerness with which commentators at the beginning of the century stretched the details of the text into the Frazerian ritual pattern laid down by Cornford (1961) as the structure of all Aristophanic comedy. Nor, indeed, are the interpretive moves unrelated. Cornford's theory of the origin of comedy from the Frazerian ritual of the death and rebirth of year-king not only reads the *katabasis* in the *Frogs* as a symbolic death and rebirth, but makes the same assumption that the text must play out a ritual preserved from an earlier stage of Greek culture. In both cases, the commentators presume that an underlying ritual pattern *explains* the details of the text, why they are there and what they mean. The assumption prevents the analysis from progressing beyond the idea *that* such a pattern is used in the work to an examination of *how* it is used.
 - 23 Moorton (1989) 322.
 - 24 Bowie (1993) 252. As noted above in note 9, Bowie (1993) 101 adopts the theory of Dionysus maturing through initiation against his own better judgement, expressed in his analysis of Philocleon in the *Wasps*. "The Chorus seem to think that Bdelycleon has changed his father (1449) but the evidence is against this view and their own words highlight the problem: "to depart from the nature one has been given is difficult' (1457f.). . . . The Athenian character appears to be remarkably resistant to the kind of changes that can be wrought by rituals like the rite of passage."
 - 25 Henderson (1975) 13–17 gives an overview of obscenity in various cults and rightly denies (pp. 15–16 and n. 49) that the comic abuse by the chorus is a *gephurismos*; he connects it instead with Dionysiac processions where jesters improvised ribald abuse on passers-by.
 - 26 Bowie (1993) 247. Following Burkert (1983), Bowie calls *thronosis* the ritual in which the initiate sat, with head covered, on a chair or stool. Depictions of the seated initiate appear on a number of vases, but the words, *thronosis* and *thronismos*, do not appear in Eleusinian contexts. On the contrary, Plato describes *thronosis* as a rite in which Corybantes dance wildly around the initiate, playing around and confusing him (*Euthyd.* 277d). Such a rite differs dramatically from the somber silences of the protagonist in Aeschylus' prologues.
 - 27 Bowie (1993) 236.
 - 28 As Lada-Richards (1999) 86 n. 161 herself admits.
 - 29 Lada-Richards (1999) 90.
 - 30 E.g. Calame (1990) 29, who defines myth and ritual as follows: "ils sont tous deux des manifestations distinctes du même processus d'élaboration intellectuelle: construction et manipulation d'objets conceptuels par le moyen de la langue et de la narration dans un cas, travail conceptuel par l'intermédiaire du corps et des objets du monde naturel ou culturel dans l'autre."
 - 31 See Redfield's description (1990) 132–3, of the intertwining of myth and ritual in a culture: "Myths and rituals are knitted together by a system of metaphorical transformations which constitute the practical logic of the culture. This is not a language because the signs are not arbitrary; the objects manipulated are found already constituted in nature. But as they are organized into a system of meanings, they are

- further formed and acquire new meanings; these in turn, by their coherence, prove to the native the truth of the system as a whole.”
- 32 See Osborne (1985); Parker (1996) 13, 25; and particularly, Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) 143, who shows how earlier views that Eleusis was not integrated into Athens until the late sixth century are based upon a literalist reading of the myths of conflict between Eleusis and Athens as history and upon the assumption that the absence of explicit mention of Athens from the Homeric *Hymn to Demeter* implies that the hymn was written before Athens had conquered Eleusis in these “historical” wars.
 - 33 The ritual procession from the center of the city to the periphery at the Eleusinian sanctuary reinforced the unity of the Athenian polis. See also de Polignac (1995) 40. Although de Polignac did not see Eleusis as a peripheral sanctuary for Athens, Osborne (1985) 172–82, Calame (1990) 361–2, and, most thoroughly, Sourvinou-Inwood (1997) have convincingly demonstrated the applicability of his model. The Eleusinian Mysteries, moreover, represented Athens’ claim to pan-Hellenic leadership, for Demeter’s double gift of the Mysteries and grain made Eleusis a pan-Hellenic shrine, to which offerings came from all over the Greek world. This pan-Hellenic position could be used as justification for Athens’ leadership of other Greek states, that is, for her position as an imperial power in the Greek world (e.g. Isocrates, *Panegyricus* 28–9, 31; Lysias 6.50; Diodorus Siculus 13. 27.1; and Callias’ statement in Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.3.6).
 - 34 As Bowie (1993) 252 notes, “The Mysteries have acted as a model for stable life in a *polis*: they are open to slave and free alike; they offer justice and proper treatment and equality to all as well as happiness in the afterlife; they exclude the incomprehensible barbarian and polluted criminal. They even offered peace in time of war: a truce from war of fifty-five days was traditionally declared.”
 - 35 Despite the fact that they are gods, both Heracles and Dionysus are, for the purposes of the play, citizens and residents of the city of Athens. The humor derives from the fact that Heracles and Dionysus converse like two regular citizens rather than from the fact that the specific temple of Heracles is depicted as an ordinary house. The latter sort of joke does appear to be made later in the transformation of the Halls of Hades into an ordinary household.
 - 36 Most famously, Odysseus goes to the realm of the dead to consult the shade of Tiresias (*Odyssey* 10.490–5, 11.100ff) because only in the underworld can he obtain the special knowledge he needs to return to his homeland. See Pausanias’ account of the Trophonius oracle (9.39.7–14) and Clark (1979) 13–52 who discusses the ancient Near Eastern predecessors of the Homeric *nekyia*, especially the epic of Gilgamesh, and carefully distinguishes this wisdom tradition of *katabases* from other descents connected with fertility cycles.
 - 37 Aristophanes, of course, plays with the meanings of desire, *pothos*, which generally conveys the idea of longing for one who is absent, but can have both erotic and funerary connotations. The most basic meaning of Dionysus’ *pothos* is mourning at the absence of the deceased, but Heracles takes it as an erotic desire for a woman or a boy, or even a man (56–7). Even when he discovers that the object of desire is a dead man, he still takes it in an erotic sense, as necrophilia rather than mourning. Only Dionysus’ declaration that he will go to Hades to bring Euripides back makes the comical confusion clear (66–70).
 - 38 Dover (1993) 14: “To be *dexios* is not simply to possess a perceptive intelligence, the capacity for quick and deep understanding; in many instances, it covers creative intelligence, skill, or expertise, and so overlaps with *sophos*.”

- 39 Plutarch, *Nicias* 29.2–3, who also relates that some Caunians, who were pursued by pirates, were allowed to enter the harbor of Syracuse because they could recite some choruses of Euripides.
- 40 The civic and salvific ramifications of retrieving a poet are present from the very beginning of the play, and the familiar modern division of aesthetic and moral dimensions of art that so exercises the commentators on Dionysus' supposed progress would not necessarily have been significant to Aristophanes' audience. Griffith (1990) points out that poetic contests were judged on the basis of poetic *sophia* that was composed of not merely aesthetic but factual and moral dimensions. The distinctions between moral and aesthetic components were made, as a rule, only by those with a specific axe to grind, such as Plato in his critique of the poets. As Griffith, *ibid.* 189, puts it, "Ancient critics, and even the poets themselves, often blur the distinctions and slide heedlessly – or opportunistically – from one to another, as if poets should be held accountable at every moment for all three."
- 41 "You can tell me about your friends who put you up when you went *there* to fetch the Cerberus dog. Well, I could use some friends, so tell me about them. Tell me the ports, the bakery shops, whorehouses, parks and roadside rests, highways and springs, the cities, boarding houses, and the best hotels scarcest in bedbugs" (lines 109–15 in the Lattimore translation). Aristophanes transforms Dionysus' inquiry into an ordinary traveller's questions about his prospective route. Showing a characteristic interest in pleasures of the flesh, Dionysus wants to know about the everyday comforts he can look forward to on his journey. See Xanthias' characterization of Dionysus as concerned only with sex and drinking (740). That he asks about inns and bakeries as well as brothels and springs shows that he does not entirely neglect eating and sleeping.
- 42 Aristophanes, of course, plays off the familiar *katabasis* pattern of action in each of Dionysus' encounters in the underworld, but he makes the most of the resonances of Heracles in the encounter at the gates of Hades. Up to that point, however, little is made of Dionysus' disguise, excepting, of course, Heracles' first sight of Dionysus (41–7) and Xanthias' appeal to Heracles/Dionysus in the Empousa scene (298). If the choruses of frogs and initiates fail to recognize the Dionysus whom they are hymning in various aspects, they also fail to recognize him as Heracles. Charon and Empousa show no signs of being impressed with the hero's lionskin.
- 43 Such an initiation would establish his special relation with Persephone, a relation that may have been interpreted in other ways in comic treatments of the story. Dover (1993) 257 remarks: "It is quite possible that in vulgar belief Persephone fancied Heracles, and that in this scene Aristophanes is quite deliberately, and rather daringly, giving a touch of Stheneboia to Persephone."
- 44 549–78. Here his disguise as Heracles is turned on its head, since the innkeepers take Dionysus' own yellow robe and boots as a disguise that Heracles is trying to hide beneath. "O, you thought I shouldn't know you with your buskins on!" (556–7 in the Rogers translation).
- 45 503–21.
- 46 As he did in the encounter with Empousa (308). In this scene, Dionysus cracks a joke about his reactions, distorting the ritual formula from the Lenaia, "the libation is poured, call the god." The scholiasts *ad loc* say that the torchbearer of Dionysus speaks the formula, at which all call out, "Iacchos, son of Semele."
- 47 Theramenes had been a leader in the oligarchic coup of the Four Hundred in 411, but

- managed to stay in favor during the restoration of the democracy by leading a pro-democratic faction of the Four Hundred. He was one of the two trierarchs who should have picked up the dead and wounded at Arginousai, but, by pressing for charges against the generals, he escaped the consequences of the disastrous aftermath of that victory, while the generals were executed after an unconstitutional mass trial. Dionysus mentions Theramenes' adeptness at political survival when Euripides has claimed him as a disciple, along with the sophist Clitophon (967–70). Compare Thucydides, 8.68.4 and 89.2–94.1, and Xenophon, *Hellenica* I 6.35, 7.5–8. Lysias attacks Theramenes (12.62–80), but the Aristotelian *Constitution of Athens* (28.5) praises him for moderation. He became one of the Thirty Tyrants, but was executed by Critias when he attempted to oppose the extreme policies of the Thirty and escape the consequences of his political choices once again. Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.3.31, relates that he was known as “Kothornos”, because, like that kind of boot, he would fit on either foot.
- 48 Xanthias urges Dionysus to match his *lema* to the *schema* he bears before knocking (464). Dionysus gives him the lionskin because he has the courage *lematia* to match the role (494), and Xanthias boasts that he has the *lema* for the part (500). Dionysus emphasizes the contrast between Xanthias' appearance as a divine hero and his true identity as a slave with his joke about Xanthias looking like the whipping boy of Melite instead of the expected god of Melite. Note the emphasis on the slave as one who is whipped, since citizens could not legally be beaten (cp. Dover, *ad loc.*). The scholiast thinks the joke is referring to Callias (cp. 428–30), but the allusion seems strained.
- 49 The whipping scene in the villa of Mysteries at Pompeii and the whipping contest at the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia in Sparta are mentioned by Bowie (1993) 236 as mystery cult parallels, but the evidence is quite late in both cases. A scholion at line 622 mentions a ritual in which boys were beaten with leek or onion (cf. Theocritus 7.106, and Hipponax 6.2). Such a symbolic flagellation, perhaps for purification (see Hesychius s.v. *katharthenai* and *mastigothenai*), is ruled out by Xanthias (621); he wants whatever is done to his master to hurt.
- 50 This differentiation of fates in the afterlife according to status and relation to the gods is familiar from the mythic tradition, from Menelaus' fate in the *Odyssey* to the “Orphic” gold tablets. Dionysus must reveal his mission to Pluto during the offstage conference before the *agôn* of Aeschylus and Euripides, for Pluto knows of it at line 1414. While it is unwise to press too far in the pursuit of dramatic logic in Aristophanes, nothing suggests that Pluto would be opposed to Dionysus' project once Dionysus contacts him, despite the use of *apodidraskein* at 81 for the description of Euripides getting out of Hades.
- 51 738–9 in the Rogers translation. See lines 640 and 179.
- 52 739–40; see Goldhill (1991) 204.
- 53 Bowie (1993) 243.
- 54 Aristophanes merely touches on the message of the possible worthiness of slaves, and he continues the scene with a series of jokes that reinforce the outside status of the slaves, who share their own pleasures and swear by their own special epithets (750, 756).
- 55 190–206.
- 56 Various scholars have classified Aristophanes' political advice along a spectrum as widely varied as their own, but his sympathies with this group of oligarchic politicians come out strongly in this chorus passage.

Part VI

THE INITIATION OF RITUAL
EXPERTS

EVENIUS BECOMES A SEER (HERODOTUS 9.93–5)

A paradoxical initiation?

Cristiano Grottanelli

In the fall of 1994 I presented a lecture on the Herodotean story of the seer Evenius from Apollonia on the Ionian Gulf.¹ I wish to return to that narrative, which I then called *une histoire d'initiation à la manteia*, because this story and its apparent initiatory motifs continue to create ambivalence in scholars. Let me cite two examples. In 1997 Walter Burkert published as an article,² a lecture that he had presented orally in Italian in Milan a few months earlier. In his Italian talk, Burkert had described the story of Evenius as an initiation narrative, but he does not mention initiation at all in the published article. Two years later, when Alan Griffiths discussed the Evenius narrative in the volume *From Myth to Reason?*, he initially remarks that “those who see ephebic coming of age” everywhere will surely find it in the Herodotean narrative, but then a few pages later he remarks: “But enough of this irresponsible Frazerian comparativism.”³

In this chapter, I return to the question of whether Evenius’s experience as recounted by Herodotus is initiatory; but I shall keep a low profile on the problem of initiation until the very end of my presentation. In order to tackle the problem of initiation correctly, I shall have to discuss two aspects of the Evenius story: (i) the difference between Evenius and all the other Herodotean seers (*manteis*), a difference that explains the peculiarities of that story; and (ii) what I shall call the “empty” quality of his experience, a quality that is connected to the “natural gift of divination” (*emphuton mantikên*) that was given to him by the gods precisely as a consequence of that experience.

This, then, is the story of Evenius, the seer from Apollonia, in David Grene’s English translation⁴

93. The Greeks remained for that day, but on the next day they sacrificed and with favorable results, their prophet being Deïphonus, son of Euenius, a man of Apollonia – I mean the Apollonia that is on

the Ionic Gulf. This prophet's father, Euenius, had the following happen to him: there is in *that* Apollonia a certain flock that is sacred to the sun. By day it grazes along the river Chon, which flows from the mountain Lacmon through the territory of Apollonia to the sea by the harbor of Oricum; by night certain chosen men, who are of the highest repute among the citizenry for their wealth and birth, guard it, each one for one year's space; for the people of Apollonia reverence this flock highly because of a prophecy. The flock passes the night in a cave far from the city. There, then, this Euenius of whom I speak, being so chosen, kept guard over it. But one night he fell asleep on his watch, and some wolves slipped by him into the cave and killed about sixty of the flock. When he realized what had happened, he kept quiet about it and told no one, intending to replace them by others he would buy. But the people of Apollonia came to know of the matter and when they knew, they cited him before a court and found him guilty; and for sleeping on his watch they condemned him to lose his eyes. So they then blinded Euenius; but from that day on, their flocks had no young, nor their land any crop, as it had before. Declarations were made to them at both Dodona and Delphi when they asked the prophets the reason for the calamity that oppressed them, and the prophets told them that it was because they had unjustly blinded the guardian of the sacred flock, Euenius. They themselves, said the gods, had set on the wolves, and they would not cease from avenging Euenius until the people of Apollonia gave reparation for what they had done to Euenius – such reparation as he personally chose and found just. After that had been done (said the gods), they themselves would give Euenius such a gift as all mankind would congratulate him on possessing.

94. Those were the oracles that were given, and the people of Apollonia, keeping them a dead secret, entrusted management of the matter to certain of the citizens. These latter then managed as follows: as Euenius sat on his official seat, they approached him and, sitting beside him talked of this and that until they finally spoke of their sympathy for what had happened to him. They gradually led the conversation on until they asked him what retribution he would choose if the people of Apollonia were of a mind to promise him requital for what they had done to him. Now, he had not heard of the oracle, and he said that he would settle for the offer of the two finest estates in Apollonia, naming the citizens to whom he knew they belonged, and, in addition, the finest house he knew of in the city. "If I get those," he said, "my anger will be laid to rest for all time to come, and this justice rendered to me will be enough." As soon as he said that, those who sat beside him lost no time in saying,

“Euenius, that is the justice that the people of Apollonia will pay you for your blinding – in accordance with the prophecy given.” At that he was very angry, feeling, when he heard the whole story, that he had been tricked. But they bought the farms from their possessors and gave them to him – the farms he had selected. And from that day forth he had a natural gift of prophecy and became very famous for it.

95. This is the Euenius whose son Deïphonus was brought by the Corinthians and prophesied for the Greek fleet. However, it is true that I have heard that this Deïphonus was not really a son of Euenius at all but one who, on the strength of his name, practiced prophecy as a trade throughout Greece.

Evenius and the other seers

The complexities of this entertaining story are discussed in my paper of 1994; but one important aspect is not mentioned in that paper. I refer to the comparison between Evenius and the other Herodotean *manteis*, presented in Table 10.1. As you see, Herodotus presents us with a complete system of five seers (*manteis*): Callias, Megistias, Hegesistratus, Teisamenus, and Deïphonus the son of Evenius. Each of these was at work in one important conflict or battle: Callias in the conflict between the city of Croton and that of Sybaris, Megistias at Thermopylae, Hegesistratus and Teisamenus at Plataea, and Deïphonus at Mycale. Four of the *manteis* I have mentioned shared the destiny of the armies they divined for: Megistias died with the other Spartans at Thermopylae, while Teisamenus and Deïphonus shared in the victories of the Spartans and the Corinthians respectively (and more in general of the Greek allies) at Plataea and Mycale, and Hegesistratus shared in the Persian defeat at Plataea. As for the first *mantis* on my list, he chose the side he would divine for. Herodotus says (5.44): “the story was that he had fled to Croton from Thelys, the despot of Sybaris, because when he was sacrificing (i.e. and looking in the victims’ innards for signs of) the victory over Croton, he could get no favorable omen.” When Croton won, the Crotoniats gave many gifts of land to Callias, and “Callias’ posterity dwelt in those plots of land down to [Herodotus’] time.”⁵

In Herodotus’ story of Callias, the gifts of land received by the seer are presented as proof of the story that he switched sides during the conflict and joined Croton; but in the context of the system I am discussing they are given in return for divination: this should be compared with the stele for Megistias at Thermopylae, with the Spartan citizenship granted to Teisamenus and his brother Hegias, and with the death of Hegesistratus at the hands of the Spartans. The house and fields given to Evenius were not meant to reward or to punish, but were the requital for the unjust punishment he had received.

Table 10.1 Herodotean Seers (*manteis*)

Herodotus text	Name of seer	Pedigree	Conflict	Outcome for original client of seer	Outcome for seer	Reward/punishment/requital
5.44–5	Callias	Elean, an Iamid (from Iamus, son of Apollo)	Croton against Sybaris	–	+	Gifts of land from Croton for Callias
7.219, 221 and 228	Megistias	Acarnanian, from Melampus	Thermopylae with Spartans	–	–	Stele at Thermopylae for Megistias
9.33–6	Teisamenus	Elean, a Clytiad of the Iamid clan	Plataea with Spartans	+	+	Spartan citizenship for Teisamenus and brother
9.37	Hegesistratus	Elean, “the most noble of the Telliadae”	Plataea with Persians	–	–	Death at the hands of Spartans for Hegesistratus
9.92–5	Deïphonus	Son of Evenius, a citizen of Apollonia	Mycalae with Corinthians	+	+	(Blindness, land, house, gift of divination for Evenius)

The five stories thus share the account of important conflicts, the role played in such contexts by famous diviners, and some mention of what was given to the diviners by the communities involved – even though the seer received rewards in three cases, a terrible punishment in the third case, and a requital in the fourth. But there is a great difference in the starting points of the narratives, because Callias, Megistias, Hegesistratus, and Teisamenus appear upon the scene as seers descended from famous mantic families, while Evenius is presented as a member of the aristocracy of Apollonia, and only the consequences of his nightly experience turn him into a diviner. So Evenius' dynasty of *manteis* begins with him – if indeed Deïphonus, the diviner of Mycale, was his son.

It is precisely this circumstance that turns the story of Evenius into a foundation myth about a line of diviners – *a foundation myth that the other four diviners do not need*, because each of them possesses a pedigree connecting him to the mythical and prototypical time when his mantic dynasty began. Callias is an Elean seer of the Iamidae, who traced their descent from Iamus, son of Apollo, and Teisamenus belongs to the same Elean family.⁶ Hegesistratus is also from Elis, and “the most noble of the Telliadae” (Herodotus 9.37). The ancient sources are not in agreement on the quantity and names of Elean families of seers: Cicero *De divinatione* 1.41.91 says there are two such families (*Elis in Peloponneso familias duas certas habet*), the Iamidae and the Clytiadae; Philostratus (*Vita Apollonii* 5.35) mentions three: the Iamidae, the Clytiadae and the Telliadae; and Pausanias traces the Iamidae to Iamus and Apollo (6.25), while making Clytius, the ancestor of the Clytiadae, a descendant of Melampus (6.17.1). The *Odyssey* (14.241) also presents Clytius as a descendant of Melampus: but the Homeric pedigree is not identical to the one we find in Pausanias 6.17.1. As for Megistias, he is from Acarnania, another section of mainland Greece that was famous for its *manteis*. He descends from Melampus, the most famous of mythical seers, who was, according to the *Odyssey* and to Pausanias, as I have just shown, the ancestor of the Elean Clytiades.

Herodotus sees Melampus as an ancestor of Acarnanian diviners and of Megistias, not of the Elean Teisamenus; but Teisamenus is *compared* by the Father of History to Melampus, because, just as Melampus won the kingship of Argos for himself and for his brother Bias, so Teisamenus won Spartan citizenship for himself and for his brother Hegias: Herodotus explicitly says: “[Teisamenus] copied what Melampus had done, if one may equate the request for kingship and a request for citizenship.” Thus, families of diviners are defined and mythical *manteis* are connected to historical seers either as ancestors of their lineage or as models for their behavior.

The seer Evenius is a total outsider in this system of noble diviners descended from prototypical *manteis*. As a citizen of Apollonia, he must *become* a seer, and the ancestor of a lineage of seers. As I have already stated, the way in which he becomes a *mantis*, albeit paradoxical, has been defined, by

myself and by others, as an initiatory experience, which involved sleeping in a cave that is the abode of animals and lies far from the human habitat.

In order to understand the specific quality of Evenius in comparison with the other Herodotean *manteis*, and to see how the initiatory nature of his experience is connected to that quality, it is useful to turn explicitly to a work that is an obvious reference for issues of initiation. In his book *Les rites de passage* in the sixth chapter, called *Les rites d'initiation*, Arnold Van Gennep described the ways in which some of the Warundi (Burundi) of what was then German East Africa became *kiranga* (according to Van Gennep the term meant “priest-magician-sorcerer”):

one became *kiranga* (1) by inheriting that role and being officially ordained (*par héritage et ordination*): shortly before dying, the father or the mother passes on the sacred spear to his or her eldest son or eldest daughter; (2) by having been hit by thunder; (3) by a sudden call (*par une vocation subite*): during a ‘spear ceremony’, a boy or girl rises suddenly, takes [his or her] place before the officiating *kiranga*, or rather before the sacred spear, stares at it intensely with all his or her energy until he or she starts to tremble, and finally faints and falls. The unconscious person is then put to lie on a mat, is cautiously moved to the interior of his or her house, sleeps there for three or four days, regains consciousness, and is consecrated as a priest or as the priestess-wife of the deity. The neighbors are called in, a “spear ceremony” is celebrated, and the new *kiranga* presides over it for the first time.

He quoted many parallel cases, listed by Hubert and Mauss,⁸ in both ancient and modern societies (“*esquimaux, chames, grecs, indonésiens, et nord-amérindiens*”), in which the sequence is, as in the cases described by Van Gennep himself, *hypnose, mort, marge et resurrection*: “this idea of a momentary death,” he concludes, “is a general theme of magical as well as of religious initiation.” In their essay, Hubert and Mauss had described such behavior: to them, the dream that took place while the initiand was unconscious was the most important part of the sequence.

Two aspects of Van Gennep’s discussion of the making of a *kiranga* are meaningful in the present context: first, the contrast between becoming a *kiranga par héritage et ordination* and becoming one *par une vocation subite*; second, the description of the *vocation subite*, involving trance or sleep, that should be envisaged, in accordance with the writings of Hubert and Mauss, as ways to obtain initiatory dreams. It is obvious that both these aspects find a precise correspondence in the Herodotean story I have presented so far, even though in the cases described by Van Gennep even the *vocation subite* is connected to the ritual of a “spear ceremony”, while Evenius’ experience is not placed within a ritual context. The first aspect corresponds to the contrast between Evenius, who became a *mantis* after his nightly experience in the cave, and the

other Herodotean *manteis*, who were seers *par héritage*. The second aspect resembles that experience; but Evenius' sleep in the cave "far from the city" differs from the hypnotic slumber of the initiands discussed by Van Gennepe, by Hubert, and by Mauss. This difference makes up what I have called the "empty" quality of that seer's experience; or, in other terms, the second of the three aspects of the story of Evenius that I wish to deal with here.

Evenius's name and his empty sleep

In my earlier paper, I compared Evenius' experience in the cave to Greek traditions such as the story of Epimenides, who fell asleep in a cave as he was looking for a lost sheep and met the goddesses Aletheia and Dike, or the story of the poet Archilochus in the Mnesiepes inscription, who met the Muses at night as he was going to market to sell a cow, swooned, regained consciousness, and found that the cow had disappeared, and a lyre lay at his feet.⁹ To these and other such "inspiration" or "call" stories framed by a pastoral context I think one should add other specific ancient Greek themes that should be compared to Evenius' nightly experience. In particular, one should look at Greek incubation, both mantic and "medical", as recently discussed by Peter Kingsley in connection with Parmenides of Elea and his school and with the cult of Apollo;¹⁰ and more precisely, at the system of divination attested at the sanctuary of Trophonius the son of Apollo at Lebadea, Boeotia, involving purification, descent in an underground cave, a dream or vision, and exit in the open air. We have three main descriptions of this oracle: Pausanias (9.39) presents the system as it worked in his time; Plutarch, in his *De deo Socratis*, places the celestial vision of Timarchus in that underground chamber; and Philostratus, in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, tells us how Apollonius descended in the cave and came back three days later holding a scroll that contained the wisdom of Pythagoras. In his article, *Aspects mythiques de la mémoire*, Jean-Pierre Vernant wrote that "the ritual in Lebadea has all the characteristic traits of an initiation ritual. One is half-way between oracular questioning and mystic revelation."¹¹

Evenius' experience has something in common with the swooning or the falling asleep of Epimenides and Archilochus, with the ritual incubation of *iatromanteis* ("healing-seers") connected to Parmenides and with the trances of those who interrogated the oracle of Trophonius. But, while all the themes I have compared to it implied visions, voices, and other communications with the gods, Evenius' experience in the cave far from the city of Apollonia is an alleged crime punished with the loss of his eyes, and his sleep is not connected by Herodotus to dreams, but presented as the cause of the killing of sixty sheep by the wolves. The noble citizen of Apollonia becomes a good *mantis* because he is a bad shepherd, and thus succeeds (in becoming a seer) because he fails (to see what he should see). The experience in the cave is both the real failure of a citizen and the virtual, paradoxical first feat of a seer.

It is helpful to compare the “empty” sleep attributed to Evenius to the empty *halucinare* of the shepherd described by Columella in a passage from his treatise *De agri cultura* (7.3.26). “A good shepherd should avoid being tricked by a carnivorous animal or by a thief as he dreams.” Both in the story of Evenius and in this passage by Columella, the shepherd sleeps (and indeed dreams, for this is the meaning of *halucinare*), but the contents of sleep are not important. What counts is the *consequence* of the sleep/dream: the damage done by thieves or by wild animals.¹²

In the Evenius narrative, the double judgement by men and by gods is marked by the triple use of words compounded with *diké*, “justice” or “judgement” (*dikasterion*, *adikós*, *dikê*) and is the living focus of the transformation as it is recounted in the story. For the citizens of Apollonia, Evenius was guilty, and it was right to punish him by depriving him of his eyesight; for the gods, the blinding of the noble shepherd was an injustice, because they, the deities, had driven the wolves to attack the sheep. In my earlier paper, I have discussed this driving of the carnivorous animals as proof of the ambiguity of Greek gods – indeed, of Greek “pastoral” gods – in the ongoing battle between human beings and wolves over the use of domestic animals. Here it is more important to show how this behavior of the gods ties in with the “empty” quality of Evenius’ sleep: that sleep is important not because of its contents – we are told nothing, I repeat, of the dreams dreamt by the shepherd during that eventful night – but because it allowed the deities to have their own way without encountering an obstacle. This means that Evenius is granted requital by the oracles of Delphi and Dodona, and given a “natural gift of divination” by the gods, because, without even knowing it, he was docile to the will of the deities. At this point, I must ask you to follow me in an experiment on the name of our *mantis*.¹³

I won’t discuss my old suggestion that the name of Evenius’ father (or alleged father) Deïphonus was consistent with the traditional Greek epic convention of naming a son after one of his father’s primary characteristics or adventures, and referred to the bloody slaughter in the cave.¹⁴ Instead, I shall concentrate on the name of the citizen of Apollonia: Evenius is composed of the adverb *eu* and of the noun *hēnia*, “reins”, and means “obedient to the reins” and thus “docile”. As an adjective or noun, *euēnios* does not appear in Herodotus or in any pre-Herodotean text; but in the Hippocratic writings it is used to indicate a disease that is easy to treat. In the writings of Plato the term appears four times. In the *Sophist* (217d) the adverb *euēniōs*, “in a docile way, attentively,” refers to the way Socrates, Thaetetus, and Theodorus listen to an anonymous Elean philosopher, a pupil of Parmenides and Zeno, who tries with their help to define a sophist. In the *Laws* (730b) *euēniōi* is an adjective used to qualify citizens who are persuaded and induced to be law-abiding; and in the *Republic* (467e), it refers to the horses used to teach children to ride; these animals, we are told, must be swift and docile, not fiery like war-horses. Finally, *euēnia* is the adjective that qualifies the chariots of the gods in the *Phaedrus* (247b): those chariots are well balanced and easy to guide; while the chariots

representing the souls of human beings are hard to drive, because “the bad horse is heavy and inclines the chariot toward the earth” if the charioteer has not been able to curb it properly.

Thus in Plato the adverb *euēniōs* and the adjective *euēnios* always refer to education and to the docility that is a quality of the superior part of the soul, and thus of the superior human type. The chariots of the gods are easy to guide because they are well balanced, but human souls can be trained to be docile. In Plutarch’s *De deo Socratis*, the adjective *euēnios* appears three times, in a context that is surely inspired by the Platonic discourse on the two horses of the soul in the *Phaedrus*. It appears twice in Plutarch’s description of Timarchus’ heavenly journey that began in the underground chamber of Trophonius at Lebadea. Timarchus saw stars bobbing about, some more, some less, like the corks one observes riding on the sea to mark nets. A voice explained to him

that the daemons whose motion was straight and ordered had souls which good nurture and training had made submissive to the rein, and whose irrational part was not unduly hard-mouthed and restive; whereas those which were constantly deviating in all directions from a straight course in an uneven and confused motion, as though jerked about on a tether, were contending with a character refractory and unruly from lack of training, at one moment prevailing over it and wheeling to the right, at another yielding to their passions and dragged along by their errors, only to resist them later and oppose them with force. For, exerting a contrary pull on the tie, which is like a bridle inserted into the irrational part of the soul, the daemon applies what is called remorse to the errors, and shame for all lawless and witful pleasures – remorse and shame being really the painful blow inflicted from this source upon the soul as it is curbed by its controlling and ruling part – until from such chastening the soul, like a docile animal, becomes obedient and accustomed to the reins, needing no painful blows, but rendered keenly responsive to its daemon by signals and signs (592a–c).

This passage is in line with the Platonic picture of the two horses that comprise the human soul; *daimôn* is another term used to indicate the upper part of the soul and the process described is the education of the soul leading to the quality expressed by the term *euēnios*. But Plutarch’s description is more complex than this, because he distinguishes between two types of good souls:

‘These souls indeed,’ the voice pursued, ‘are brought to their duty and made firm in it late and gradually; but from those other souls, which from their very beginning and birth are docile to the reins and obedient to their daemon, comes the race of diviners and of men inspired’ (592c).

The second type of good soul is thus endowed with an inborn docility (*ek de tôn euênion ekeinôn . . . ex archês kai geneseôs*): it is characteristic of diviners (*to mantikon* [genos]) and of inspired persons (*kai theokloutoumenon genos*). This word *theokloutoumenon* (“inspired”), just as the adjective *euênios*, is also used as a name, for example: the seer Theoklymenos in the *Odyssey*, the only *mantis* in the poem who actually has a vision. Plutarch classified the soul of Socrates with its *daimôn*, and of course the soul of Timarchus, in this special category, and adds the soul of another famous man, Hermodorus or Hermotimus of Clazomenae, that was believed to leave his body and to witness many things said and done in remote places. The tradition about this last figure is corrected by Plutarch in order to adjust it to the specific theory of the *daimôn* presented in the dialogue, and the superior part of Hermodorus’ soul is described as a horse held on a tether and left free to roam as far as the tether allows.

Elsewhere, Plutarch (*De defectu oraculorum* 431e–432f) states that souls have an inborn power (*dunamin . . . sumphuton*) that allows them to divine: even if that power remains hidden and inactive, he explains, souls often bloom and are enlightened in dreams or in dying. Only some souls, however, free themselves from what contaminates and hides their power and thus become fully able to use it.

Two aspects of Plutarch’s use of the term *euênios* are meaningful in connection with the Herodotean *mantis* of that name. First, Plutarch distinguishes not only between two types of good souls, but also between two kinds of diviners: the first kind is able to read signs, while the second is “supremely blessed and in very truth divine” and communicates directly with the gods, but not with words. These are the truly “docile to the rein and obedient to the *daimôn*,” i.e., to the upper part of the soul. Such special diviners are the human beings who are able to develop the inborn divining power of their souls: and this they achieve because they free their souls from contamination by virtue of their inborn docility. In the *De deo Socratis*, Timarchus is the representative of this *genos*.

The example chosen by Plutarch at this point is important in the present context. For Timarchus is an initiate of the *manteion* of Trophonius at Lebadea, that is, of the “initiation” sanctuary mentioned by Vernant, in the passage I have quoted above: his celestial and cosmic vision takes place after he has descended into that sanctuary’s oracular crypt, where “he lay a long time in the darkness, not clearly aware whether he was awake or dreaming”. This means that Plutarch’s illustration of the meaning of the adjective *euênios* refers it to a special type of *mantis* and makes use of the story of a descent into the cave of Trophonius. And that descent is precisely one of the mantic experiences I have compared to the nightly adventure of Evenius in Herodotus. By discussing Evenius’ *name*, we have thus come back to his *sleep* in the cave far from the city. We are thus compelled to return to Evenius’ sleep, and to the second problem I must discuss here: the “empty” quality of that sleep.¹⁵

The relationship between Evenius' name and his nightly experience is not one of mere correspondence via Plutarch. It is a more complex relationship, because the empty quality of Evenius' sleep, presented merely as the occasion that made the massacre of the sheep possible, may be compared to the quality of the name Evenius, a proper name whose meaning is clear, but not confirmed in the Herodotean text by the existence of corresponding adjectives, adverbs, or nouns. It would be possible to say that Herodotus' story contains the bare bones – a dreamless slumber and a proper name – of a body that is fleshed out only by Plutarch, who uses materials *attested* only after Herodotus' time, in the texts of the Hippocratic school, in the Platonic dialogues, and in the various stories about the dream, the vision, or the call of seers, healers, and poets. The situation is expressed synthetically in Table 10.2.

Though this configuration of the correspondence between the story of Evenius and Plutarch' narrative of Timarchus' vision at Lebadea is surely meaningful, it does not seem to provide a clear solution for the problem of Evenius' empty sleep. It is, in fact, quite possible to imagine that Herodotus is telling a story that implicitly contains all the essential aspects of Plutarch's account of the vision in Lebadea, while *being silent* about all the "secret" details that do not seem to him strictly necessary for his subject – the origin of a *mantis* who does not belong to the famous Elean or Acarnanian families of diviners.¹⁶ If this were the case, Evenius' name and his sleep in the shepherd's cave far from the city of Apollonia, could well be traces of the unexpressed contents of this story. But it is also possible to believe that Herodotus *knew nothing* of dreams or visions in the shepherds' cave, or of the complex implications of Evenius' name revealed – or rather constructed – by the lexical choice of a Platonic writer who belonged to a totally different cultural world. In any case, though it is hard to imagine that the name of the citizen of Apollonia who became a *mantis* was really devoid of meaning in its specific context, it seems clear that that citizen's sleep was perfectly meaningful in itself apart from any dream, because it opened up the desired possibility for the gods who drove the wolves into the cave.

Table 10.2 Herodotus' Evenius and Plutarch's Timarchus

	Experience in a cave	Dolcility
Herodotus	Empty sleep: only an occasion for the wolves driven by the gods	Evenius' name
Plutarch	Vision: the sky and the different souls, as moving stars	<i>euénios</i> referring to the souls of diviners and men inspired

The gift of an inborn gift

The name of Evenius, and in any case the shepherd's sleep among the sheep in the cave, both point to a person who is secretly, and unconsciously, obedient to the will of the gods. The two interventions, respectively by his fellow citizens and by the gods, that interfere with Evenius' capacity to see the visible and/or the invisible, apparently change little in his true nature, because the Apollonians blind a man whom they have found guilty of not seeing what he should have seen, while the gods give a gift of divination to a man they know to be a docile instrument of their will. We should thus turn precisely to this gift: the "inborn gift of prophecy" (*emphuton mantikên*), that Evenius held (*eiche*) after his fellow citizens had cheated him of his requital – a gift that had been promised by the gods when they spoke through the *prophêtai* of Delphi and Dodona.

This aspect of the narrative can only be treated by placing Evenius' gift in its correct context. I shall try to do this in two interpretive moves, by connecting it experimentally with specific conceptions of the special abilities of some human beings and of the call or initiation involved. First of all, I shall note that the natural gift of divination given to Evenius could be compared to Plutarch' idea of the inborn power of prophecy (*dunamin ... sumphuton*) common to all human beings, but developed into a special ability to communicate directly with the gods only by those souls "which from the very beginning and birth (*ex archês kai genesêôs*) are docile to the rein (*euênion*)". But this comparison may not be a solution of the problem of Evenius' gift, because, of course, Plutarch' theory presupposes and develops the (post-Herodotean) Platonic doctrine about the two parts of the human soul.

So much for my first move: the comparison of Herodotus' treatment of Evenius' inborn gift with the theories of Plutarch and Plato is anachronistic. But of course the idea that the gods give some humans a gift that is at the same time in some sense inborn is much older than Plato. It is already in Homer, and indeed my second move is to compare Evenius' gift with similar Homeric conceptions. A good example is *Odyssey* 22.347–8 "I am self-taught, and a god in my heart songs / of all kinds has planted" (*autodidaktos d'eimi, theos de moi en phresin oimas / pantoias enephusen*). This is what the singer (*aoidos*) Phemius says to Odysseus as that hero, bent on revenge, is about to slay him because he has sung for the suitors. Though the term *autodidaktos* may well mean "really taught", "well taught", it is usually translated as "self-taught"; but, if the latter translation is correct, it surely refers to the autonomy of the singer's creative production, that depends on the god and not on any human inspiration. Phemius's song is both profoundly interior, deriving as it does from the singer's heart (*phrenes*) and exterior: inspired by a deity. The verb *emphuô* corresponds precisely to the adjective *emphutos* we find applied to *mantikê* to describe Evenius' gift. The aorist form we find in this passage is active, and means *inserere*, "to insert, to plant".¹⁷

The correspondence seems perfect even if Phemius is a singer and not a seer.¹⁸ The passages in which the *aoidos* and the *mantis* go together in Homeric and Hesiodic diction are too well known to be cited here; and the divine quality of *aoidoi* and *manteis* (as well as physicians and leaders of men) was still stressed by Empedocles in the early fifth century BCE. To this I should add that another famous Homeric passage presents both blindness and proficiency in epic diction as gifts of the Muse. This is *Odyssey* 8. 63–4:

Then the herald drew near, leading the good singer (*aoidon*),
Whom the Muse loved above all, and gave him both good and evil:
Of his sight she deprived him, but gave him sweet song.

Here blindness plays the same role among the gifts granted to an *aoidos* that it plays among the gifts granted to the mythical *mantis* Teiresias and to other *manteis* such as Phineus, Ophioneus, Phormio of Erythrae (Pausanias 7.5.6), and of course Evenius.¹⁹ But in the case of Tiresias, just as in the case of Evenius, the blinding is a punishment: Tiresias is blinded by the gods because he has seen what he was not supposed to see, while Evenius is blinded by humans who think he has not seen what he should have seen; and both blind *manteis* are repaid with a special gift of divination granted by the gods.

This second move is thus more convincing than the first move, because a continuity is attested between the gift given to the Homeric *aoidoi* and the gift given to the Herodotean *mantis*. But the relationship between the two conceptions is complex. On the one hand, an important difference remains, because in the case of the “inspired” singers in Homer the inner gift, which is both autonomous in respect to the human sphere and offered by the deities, is never presented as suddenly beginning at one precise moment of the epic narrative, while Evenius’ gift is said to belong to him *meta tauta*, “after this,” i.e., after he has felt angry because he has been tricked by his fellow citizens. If we consider this difference, we shall be led to conclude that the contradiction we are finding in the Evenius narrative is typical of the Herodotean story and not of the Homeric situations, and that the problem may not be solved by my Homeric comparisons. On the other hand, even this specific position of the gift in the narrative sequence differentiates the Herodotean case from the Homeric view, because the story of Evenius shows clearly that the seer’s paradoxical experience presupposes his special quality. Evenius is promised a wonderful gift – obviously the gift of prophecy (*mantiké*) – by the gods of Delphi and Dodona *after* the disasters caused by his punishment, and holds (*eiche*) the *emphuton mantikén* only at the *end* of the story; yet he is given his name at the very *beginning* of the narrative, and is docile in regard to the will of the gods *towards the beginning*, as he falls asleep among the sacred sheep. The contradictory quality of Evenius’ experience is thus clearly underlined by the result of my second move; but that move does not help us to solve the problem of the inborn gift.

Towards a tentative conclusion

I have dealt with the two aspects of the Herodotean story of Evenius that were the most specific traits of that mantic figure. I have thus prepared the ground for a discussion of the possible initiatory quality of the Apollonian's experience in the cave far from his city. I have shown, I think, that Evenius' experience was recounted by Herodotus because the (supposed) father of Deïphonus, the seer who worked for the Corinthians at Mycale, was the only important Herodotean *mantis* who was not presented with a traditional mantic pedigree (Elean or Acarnanian), and thus the only one who became a *mantis par vocation subite* (Van Gennepe) and not simply as the heir of a dynasty of diviners. I have then shown that the experience of Deïphonus' (real or alleged) father, Evenius, was depicted as consisting of that citizen's failure to protect the city's sacred sheep from the wolves, and of a sleep described merely as the right occasion for the slaughter in the cave, not as the receptacle of a mantic dream or vision. I have suggested that such an "empty" sleep could well have been the implicit outward form of a traditional call or inspiration story placed in a pastoral setting not unlike the numerous and standardized cases found in several other ancient Greek texts; but I have also noted that the "empty" quality of Evenius' experience was a meaningful trait of the narrative. Finally, I have dealt with the paradox of the gift granted by the gods to the *mantis* in Apollonia, suggesting that the future seer's behavior in the cave far from his city was condemned by his fellow citizens but seen by the gods as a proof of his docility to their will. I shall now add that, while this possible interpretation did not allow me to solve all the problems I was confronted with, it seems useful because it helps us to understand the behavior and the intentions of the gods in the Herodotean story, and to envisage the immortals as sending the wolves against the flock of the Sun in order to give the Apollonians a *mantis*.

But what does my Evenius story contribute to our general discussion? I think two aspects should be stressed. First of all, the tantalizing aspect of retrojection. By retrojection I mean the use of later texts to interpret earlier texts. I think the comparison between Herodotus' Evenius and the Platonic-Plutarchean usage of the term *euênios*, especially in connection with *mantikê*, is a wonderful example of this. In my opinion, in such cases extreme attitudes are harmful: I could have decided to *ignore* the connection, because the material presented by Plato and Plutarch was too late to be of any use for understanding Herodotus, or I could have chosen to swallow the connection whole and to propose to you a Platonic-Plutarchean interpretation of our Herodotean *mantis*. Instead, I presented Herodotus first, and then Plato and Plutarch: some connections are probable, but I hope the discussion will contribute more about what should be deduced from them, and how it should be deduced.

My second point is precisely initiation, to which we can now finally turn, in the light of my discussion of the particular features of Evenius' tale, of the

empty quality of his sleep and of the inborn nature of his mantic gift. As I mentioned at the beginning, Burkert, in an earlier, oral version of his article of 1997, and Griffiths, in a paper published in 1999, both mention initiation or coming-of-age rituals in reference to Evenius, and the term initiation was used, though only fleetingly, in my earlier treatment of the subject. If I understand them correctly, both Burkert and Griffiths have subsequently, in different ways, recanted. Now it's my turn to address the subject.

If initiation is a type of ritual, the story of Evenius as told by Herodotus does not qualify as a possible example of initiation, because it is a narrative about an *experience* and not about a *ritual*. Other reasons for avoiding the use of initiation as a key term have been presented in this volume, and on the whole I find the increasingly critical attitude of the my co-contributors convincing, even though I admire Vidal-Naquet. Yet Evenius becomes a *mantis*, and is believed by some to be the father of a *mantis*, as a consequence of his experience in the cave. So if the Herodotean narrative is not the description of a *rite de passage*, it is indeed the description of a *passage*. As I have shown above, Evenius becomes a *mantis*, in Van Gennep's terms, *par vocation subite*, but, unlike the *kiranga* I have compared to the Apollonian diviner, he is transformed into a religious mediator not within a ritual context, but while he is trying to fulfil a functional task. As for the transformation, it is clearly presented as the emerging of a pre-existing inclination, or, in other words, as the acceptance of what I have called an inborn gift. Evenius is changed without a ritual and thus becomes what he was virtually. Is this an initiation?

The methodological stance of those scholars who discuss Greek narratives and rituals in terms of initiation, thus enacting a more or less implicit comparatism with exotic societies, is not too different from the one I have just described in talking of retrojection. Indeed, what many of us are criticizing in this volume is another type of retrojection, inaugurated by the often quoted Lafitau, who retrojected not later texts, but his *Sauvages Américains*.²⁰ In this case, too, retrojection is tantalizing, and has to be handled with care. But we should at least recognize that between the story of Evenius and the initiations discussed by Van Gennep there is, as Friz Graf puts it in his essay, a Wittgensteinian *family resemblance*. And family resemblances cannot be dismissed easily, because, as we all know, blood is thicker than water.²¹

Notes

- 1 The lecture was presented at a conference held in Athens to honor Jean-Pierre Vernant and to further the cooperation between French and Greek specialists of ancient Greek culture. There were twenty-eight short papers grouped together in workshops, and seven lectures: Gregory Nagy, Walter Burkert, Marcel Detienne, Claudine Leduc, D.N. Maronitis, Françoise Héritier Augé, and myself. My lecture eventually appeared in 1999 as Grottanelli (1994–5).

- 2 Burkert (1997).
- 3 Griffiths (1999) 175 and 177.
- 4 Grene (1987) 652–4. I am grateful to the University of Chicago Press for allowing the extended use here of Prof. Grene’s translation, for which the University of Chicago has a 1987 copyright and all rights reserved.
- 5 Herodotus 5.44–5. On divination before battle: Pritchett (1971) 109–15. On the Iamidae: Inglese (1991–4).
- 6 According to Herodotus, he was “an Elean by birth, a Clytiad of the Iamid clan”, although according to How and Wells, the word “*klutiadên* here is a late gloss, and does not occur in Pausanias 3.11.6, a passage obviously derived from this.”
- 7 Van Gennepe (1909) 154–5.
- 8 Hubert and Mauss (1904) 37–9.
- 9 I find the same comparisons in Griffiths (1999) 173.
- 10 Kingsley (1995) and (1999).
- 11 Vernant (1974) 88, note 30.
- 12 On this aspect of Evenius’ dream see Grottanelli (1994–5) 93–5.
- 13 At the conference in Chicago, Matthew Dickie suggested that the original meaning of the name was not specific but just another form of the more frequent name Euenus. But, for my etymological reading of Evenius’ name as “Goodreins” (Griffiths), I rely also on Conon’s version of the story (*FGrH* 26 F1. 30), when the Apollonian seer (*mantis*) is called Pithenius, which Griffiths translates as “Obeyreins”: see Griffiths (1999) 173 with notes 16–18.
- 14 Grottanelli (1994–5) 85–6.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 93–5.
- 16 On Herodotus’ silence about the “secret” aspects of religious life, see Mora (1986) 130–42, and Harrison (2000) 182–91 and 240.
- 17 In other Homeric verses the perfect is intransitive, and means *innatus sum, inbaereo*, “I am inborn, I inhere”: e.g. *Iliad* 8.84: *triches kraniô empephusi* (“The hair inheres to the skull”).
- 18 On Greek singers and their inspiration: see Belardi (1981) 3–21 – especially 4–15 for Phemius’ *autodidaktos d’eimi* – and Brillante (1993).
- 19 Halliday (1913; reprint: 1967) 77–9.
- 20 Lafitau (1724).
- 21 On this problem see Versnel (1994) 13–14 with note 37.

THE INITIATION OF THE MAGICIAN

Transition and power in Graeco-Egyptian ritual

Ian Moyer

The category of “magical initiation” is an anomaly. Scholars generally identify initiation as a social phenomenon: the passage of initiands from one social group to another through a ritual process of separation, liminality, and reintegration.¹ The magician, however, is usually understood as a more solitary figure, and in many cultures as permanently marginal.² These considerations did not, however, prevent Arnold Van Gennep from treating the magician’s initiation as a variety of *rite de passage*, since he recognized the homologies between the induction of the magician into his profession and other forms of initiation.³ Interpreters of magical initiations in the Greco-Roman world have similarly recognized the hermeneutic value of these homologies in their work: the aspiring magician of antiquity had to undergo a rite of initiation before taking up the profession, and the structure of this rite, it has been argued, is more or less analogous to that of Graeco-Roman mystery initiations, and features a good deal of the separation and marginality we have come to expect from a *rite de passage*. Though the third, integrative stage of Van Gennep’s tripartite ritual process was not as salient as in age-group initiations or those of cult associations, certain rites described in literary sources and the magical papyri were undoubtedly meant to confer on the initiand the status and prerogatives of the magician.⁴

These comparisons – to a modern scholarly paradigm and to a related class of phenomena in the ancient world – have helped to identify and to differentiate a certain class of rites, but only as an imperfect subspecies or parallel phenomenon. The inadequacy of this approach, I suggest, lies in the choice of *comparanda*. Comparing “magical initiations” with the Graeco-Roman mysteries is somewhat problematic, since most of the evidence for these rites, though in the Greek language, is an amalgam drawn from Egyptian and Graeco-Roman cultures. I shall re-examine two examples of

magical initiation, one a ritual (*PGM* I.1–42) and another a narrative (the prologue of a treatise on astrological botany attributed to Thessalos of Tralles), using Egyptian ritual practices as comparanda rather than those of Graeco-Roman mystery initiations. My aim is to elucidate the transvaluations of traditional Egyptian religious structures, which result in a “magical initiation”. This examination will reveal certain parallels with patterns of Egyptian priestly initiation and the traditional prerogatives of access to the divine which suggest that these magical initiations are part of a discourse of claims to magical authority in which traditional religious structures are adapted to new social and cultural uses. The adaptation and manipulation of these traditional patterns suggest a second-order awareness of initiation as a category and a self-consciousness in the creation of new rituals and narratives of initiation.⁵

A magical ritual for obtaining quasi-priestly status.

The ritual instructions given in a Greek magical handbook of late-antique date (*PGM* I.1–42) are indeed readily comprehensible as a magical initiation from the perspective of a Greek or Roman.⁶ The aim of the rite is to gain a daemonic assistant, one “who will reveal everything to you clearly,” and even share your meals and bed – a servant and companion, whose presence confers the status and power of a magician on to the practitioner. The practitioner first drowns a falcon in the milk of a black cow,⁷ mixed with Attic honey, and then mummifies it in wrappings of undyed cloth and a coating of old wine and myrrh. Beside the falcon are put the practitioner’s fingernail clippings and hair, along with a short magical formula written on a piece of pure papyrus. Shortly before sunrise, the initiand drinks the milk and honey, sets up the mummified falcon in a shrine made of juniper wood, and crowns the shrine. Thereafter, he makes an offering of non-animal foods, and recites an invocation directly to the falcon before reclining with it. When dismissed (presumably by the divinity invoked), the magician departs, retracing his steps,⁸ and enjoys a meal with his new daemonic assistant. Supplementary instructions enjoin the reader to keep the rite a secret, and to maintain purity for seven days. This last instruction makes more sense if it is carried out closer to the beginning of the rite, whether before the initial preparations or before the actual performance.⁹

Upon completion, the magician was thought to gain supernatural knowledge, and direct contact with the divine, mediated through a demonic assistant. It is clear that a transition has taken place, bringing the practitioner into closer contact with the divine world from which he draws newfound power. But is it appropriate to understand the ritual process as characterized by acts of separation and a symbolism of marginality? The rite revolves around the creation and worship of a mummified falcon. Killing the falcon, it has been argued, is a rite of separation, since the magician moves away from

human normalcy by harming a sacred animal.¹⁰ But the particular way the practitioner kills the falcon is significant. In Egyptian culture, death by drowning had long been associated with the mythology of Osiris, and conferred special status on the deceased as a “praised one” (Egyptian *besy*).¹¹ Herodotus reports that those who drowned in the Nile were treated as a special category of dead, as though “something more than human.”¹² Demotic legal documents, which transfer the duties and income of funeral cult, at times specify whether the tomb in question belongs to a *besy*, suggesting particular honors for the drowned.¹³ The Demotic magical papyri, moreover, make it explicit that the process of drowning a creature is intended to create a *besy*.¹⁴ The term (transliterated into Greek as *besiês*) also appears in the Greek magical papyri with the same meaning.¹⁵ Though it was undoubtedly small comfort to the falcon, drowning functioned as an apotheosis, elevating the creature to divine status.¹⁶ Drinking the milk in which the falcon was drowned connected the practitioner to the divine. This process of absorbing supernatural power is familiar from the Late Egyptian use of water poured over curative and apotropaic images such as the well-known Horus cippi.¹⁷ Indeed, the reader of the text is told “there will be something divine in your heart.”

The divine identity of the falcon is confirmed by the treatment the bird received after its apotheosis by drowning. The mummification, enshrinement, and offerings to the falcon in this rite have a direct relationship to one of the most typically Egyptian forms of religious worship in the Late Period: the cult of divine animals. At sites such as Saqqara, Tûna el-Gebel, and many others besides, various birds and animals were raised in sacred precincts and then mummified and buried in subterranean galleries, usually as dedications made by pilgrims.¹⁸ The most well known of these sacred animals was the Apis bull, the emanation or soul of Ptah. Tended, embalmed and buried at Memphis, the bull became identified in death with Osiris as Oserapis. Smaller animals, and especially birds such as the ibis and the falcon were also enormously popular in this form of worship. It is estimated that some four million ibises are buried in the catacombs of Saqqara alone. Texts from the archive of Hor of Sebennytos, one of the priests responsible for the cult at Saqqara, reveal that the ibis was regarded primarily as an emanation of Thoth, while the falcon was considered the emanation of a number of divinities, including Ptah, Apis, Osiris, Horus, Isis and others.¹⁹ Inscriptions on some ibis coffins at Tûna el-Gebel identify the deceased bird with the god Thoth.²⁰ The acts of drowning and then mummifying the falcon in the *PGM* ritual were clearly meant to mark the creature as a divine emanation.²¹

The invocation addressed directly to the bird,²² which confers a number of divine names, epithets and attributes, dispels any doubts as to whether these ritual actions were intended to effect a divinization. The falcon is, of course, most commonly associated with the god Horus in his various forms, but as in

the animal cult at Saqqara the falcon could be identified with a number of divinities. The invocation refers to various aspects of the god Horus and other figures closely associated with him. After a series of vowels, he is first addressed with the general epithets, “Good Husbandman,” and “Agathos Daimon.”²³ The first words of the *voces magicae* (“magical utterances”) that follow are probably to be rendered *Harpon Knouphi*. A proposed derivation from the Egyptian phrase “Horus the pillar of Kenmet” – the decan rising with the sun at the time of the Nile flood²⁴ – would tie this phrase to the invocation immediately following the rest of the *voces magicae*, where the falcon is addressed as the constellation Orion, which Plutarch identifies as the soul of Horus.²⁵ Orion was known in Coptic as the “star of Horus.”²⁶ Far more frequently, however, Orion was associated with Osiris. In the late period, Orion could even be depicted in the form of a mummy, owing to a pun on the Egyptian name of Orion, and the word for mummy.²⁷ Osiris was believed to ascend to heaven and become Orion, and the king likewise ascended to heaven through the power of Orion.²⁸ The subsequent invocations refer to the fecundity of the Nile brought about by Osiris, the solar cycle, the emergence of the creator from the primordial waters, and the cosmic creation.²⁹ The references to Osiris in the underworld are particularly apt, since deceased and embalmed animals in the cults of Saqqara and Tûna el-Gebel, like their human counterparts, were often identified as “the Osiris NN.”³⁰ Clearly, the mummified falcon set up in its juniper wood shrine was an image of Horus, linked through this invocation to the underworld god Osiris, the solar god Re (or Horus’ own solar manifestations), and the creator god Re-Atum.

The divine nature of the mummified falcon is critical to understanding the initiation process undertaken by the prospective “magician,” since acts of approaching and offering worship to an embodiment of a god, whether a mummified “soul of Horus” or a cult statue, were the traditional prerogatives of the Egyptian *priest*. The *PGM* rite seems to elide the distinction between the cult of sacred animals and the worship of a divine image by setting the falcon up in a wooden shrine, rather than interring it in coffin and tomb; but either way – by creating a manifestation of the divine and then offering it sacrifice and a hymn the practitioner confers upon himself a quasi-priestly status. In traditional Egyptian practice, the day of the priest’s first entrance to the interior shrine of the temple, and the privilege of access to the divine image which that act created, constituted initiation into priestly status. The evidence for the initiation of Egyptian priests is scattered and allusive, but a significant corpus of inscriptions set up by priests at Karnak to commemorate the “day of initiation” survives from the Third Intermediate Period (Dynasties XXI–XXIII, ranging in date from 983 BC to as late as ca. 750 BC).³¹ Entering into sacred space and viewing the sacred image constituted the most significant elements of the rite. Crossing the boundary between the profane world and the inner sanctuary served also to cross the limit between human and divine worlds, owing to an equation between sacred space and the

heavenly realm in Egyptian religious thought. This equation is made explicit in some of the testimonia which conclude the initiation texts.³²

As Kruchten has shown in his extensive analysis of the uses of the verb *besi* and substantives derived from it, this notion of ascent, or emergence from a lower level to a higher is central to the basic meaning of the word. The word is written phonetically and followed by a fish,³³ and walking legs determinative, perhaps representing a fish leaping or breaching the water's surface. Derived from this verb is the substantive *bes*, which denotes the particular image of the god capable of crossing the boundary between earth and the realm of the gods.³⁴ Access to this image was restricted to those who had been "initiated" into the appropriate status, through an introduction (*bes*) into its presence.³⁵ This power of crossing boundaries appears to inhere in the image itself, and it is tempting (if perhaps speculative) in the context of the present discussion of the mummified falcon at the center of the *PGM* rite, to trace a connection to the daimon *besy* in the Litany of Re, who introduces the deceased king to the heavens and is represented as a mummiform falcon.³⁶ In any case, the use of the term *bes* in all its meanings continues in hieroglyphic inscriptions well into the Graeco-Roman period. The word is attested in this particular initiatory sense in the hieroglyphic portion of the trilingual Canopus decree of 238 BCE, where it denotes the legitimacy of one properly inducted into office. Twice it refers to the induction of the king, and in one of the cases, it is used to describe Ptolemy III as a "legitimate ruler" (*beqa en bes*).³⁷ The verb *bes* in the Canopus decree also refers to the initiation of priests.³⁸

Temple inscriptions of the Graeco-Roman period also employ the term frequently. At the Ptolemaic temple of Horus at Edfu, it is the *bes*-image upon which the god Horus settles, or with which he unites in his "shrine" or his "Great palace."³⁹ At the temple of Dendera (late first century BCE), priests are given the epithet "initiated (*bes*) into their duty/office".⁴⁰ Particularly relevant for understanding the ritual creation and worship of a divine figure described in *PGM* I.1–42 is a set of inscriptions at the temple of Dendera relating to the workshop in which divine images were crafted.⁴¹ According to these texts, apparently drawn from a manual of procedures for creating cult images, different stages of the work were completed in different areas, with the final acts of consecration to take place in the "House of Gold." Though the text lists a number of craftsmen required for fashioning the physical forms of the statues, they are explicitly excluded from the "secret work" of the House of Gold, since they are uninitiated.⁴² Only priests were permitted access to the divine image during this crucial phase of the liturgy in which the ceremony of Opening the Mouth was performed, and the statue made into a living image.⁴³ The ritual instructions of *PGM* I.1–42 do not include any rite resembling the Opening of the Mouth, but the title given to a ritual invocation in another spell is significant in this regard. *PGM* XII.270–350 provides instructions for the magical consecration of a ring whose stone is carved with an image of the god Helios (Re). After the main body of

instructions, a supplementary rite is appended. This second invocation, called the *ouphôr*, purports to give the practitioner the power to command the gods and make statues, engravings and carved stones come alive. The name of the rite appears to derive from the Egyptian *wep-ra*, “Opening of the Mouth.”⁴⁴ Like *PGM* I.1–42, this spell aims at creating special status and power for the practitioner through the creation of a divine image, and rites parallel to those normally considered the preserve of Egyptian priests.

When set against a background of Egyptian priestly initiations and the priest’s exclusive privilege of access to the divine image, the central elements of the *PGM* I.1–42 rite appear to be further examples of the “miniaturization” of ritual typical of the magical papyri. As J.Z. Smith has observed, the texts of the Greek magical papyri “display . . . a thoroughly domesticated understanding of sacrifice” in which procedures carried out on small tables, altars, and shrines are to be understood “as replacements of (and for) temple space and rituals.”⁴⁵ This observation applies to initiatory ritual as well as sacrificial. Here the cult image, its shrine and the drama surrounding them have been reduced in scale to serve a transitional function in an individualistic practice, apart from the traditional locus of divine access, the temple.⁴⁶ By constructing a personal divine image and offering it worship and hymns, the practitioner is assuming the functions and prerogatives of the priest, and thereby the powers which seemed to inhere in the office. The recognized power which results from achieving such a transition is implicit in *PGM* IV.930–1114, a “charm which produces a direct vision.” There, the practitioner is instructed, “Whenever you seek divinations, be dressed in the garb of a prophet (*prophētēs* = Egyptian *hem-netjer*, “god’s servant”), shod with the fibers of the doum palm . . .” By assuming the guise of an Egyptian priest, the practitioner enhanced his magical powers.

Appropriating priestly status through a narrative of magical initiation

Direct access to the divine, and the priest’s privilege of approaching the divine image is also a central element of the narrative ascribed to Thessalos of Tralles. In the prologue to a work on astrological botany, Thessalos relates the marvelous tale of his quest for magical knowledge, which led him to the Upper Egyptian city of Thebes, and an encounter with the divine.⁴⁷ The ritual means by which Thessalos gains magical knowledge are portrayed as an initiation into the powers and status of a magician.⁴⁸ The pattern is similar to the less serious account at the beginning of Lucian’s tale of the sorcerer’s apprentice, and Thessalos’ narrative could be analyzed according to the conventional terminology of the *rite de passage*.⁴⁹ But as in the magical recipe discussed in the previous section, the ritual framework to which Thessalos’ narrative refers is more specific: the Egyptian priest’s exclusive access to the divine, and Egyptian priestly initiation. In this case, however, the perspective

is decidedly an outsider's. Though Thessalos' aim to gain *magical* knowledge is made explicit, the process by which he achieved his direct revelation of the god Asclepius (= Egyptian "Imhotep") is *religious*, since it is conducted by an Egyptian priest as a traditional form of religious rite.⁵⁰ The value of this Egyptian rite, however, undergoes a transformation in the way Thessalos represents his interaction with the Egyptian priest. Though the rite itself is not an initiation, Thessalos, in the course of his narrative, appropriates the prerogatives of direct access to the divine normally reserved for the Egyptian priestly class. The quasi-priestly status, power, and esoteric knowledge that this entails is then passed off as if it were magical.⁵¹

As he describes his adventure, Thessalos reveals an awareness of similar narratives current in literature of the period, which record the tribulations of a hero passing from one fount of wisdom to another, and eventually arriving at his goal.⁵² Thessalos' tale takes the form of a letter addressed to the Roman emperor (either Claudius or Nero), in which he claims to have outstripped all others in the search for the miraculous.⁵³ According to this epistolary prologue, he set out from his home in Asia Minor with a large amount of money, and devoted himself to the study of philosophy and medicine in Alexandria. After assiduously following the lectures of theoretical physicians (*dialektikôn iatrôn*), he made the rounds of the libraries in preparation for his departure. There he came upon a book attributed to the legendary king and astrologer Nechepso. It contained a collection of miraculous remedies based on the sympathies of plants and stones with signs of the zodiac, and promised amazing results to the bearer of its arcane knowledge.⁵⁴

Unfortunately, Thessalos' attempt to put the remedies of Nechepso into practice ended in complete failure – a failure made worse by a hasty proclamation of his discovery to friends and relations in Asia Minor. Rather than face the ridicule of his Alexandrian colleagues, or the disappointed expectations of the folks back home, he consigned himself to wandering in Egypt until he should be able to accomplish something of his rash promises. Eventually he arrived in the Upper Egyptian city of Thebes (Diospolis), where – in order to discover magical powers – he tried to ingratiate himself with the priests, most of whom were scandalized at his propositions:

And so I came to Diospolis – the oldest city of Egypt, containing many temples – and spent some time there. For there were many scholarly high priests [there] and [elders] adorned with subtle learning. As time passed and my friendship with them grew, I inquired if some sort of magical operation was still preserved. The majority of them, I observed, were indignant at my rashness in such undertakings.⁵⁵ But I was not shaken from the friendship of one of them, who could be trusted because of the impressiveness of his character and the extent of his age. This man professed to have the ability to perform direct divination by means of a bowl.⁵⁶

Thessalos drew aside this one priest who did not reject him outright. In a secluded grove away from the city, the desperate Greek implored the Theban priest to assist him with his predicament. The priest agreed and at his bidding Thessalos maintained purity for three days. He then met the priest at dawn on the third day – having first concealed on his person a papyrus and some ink! The priest led Thessalos to a pure house which he had prepared, and asked the Greek with whom would he like to converse – some spirit of the dead or a god. Thessalos then revealed his intentions: to speak one on one (*monôi moi pros monon homilein*) with the god Asclepius (Imhotep).⁵⁷ The priest was visibly displeased. Nevertheless, he had promised, and so he carried out the rite. He seated Thessalos before the place where the god was to appear, summoned Asclepius (Imhotep) with his ineffable names,⁵⁸ and left the physician to question the god about the herbal remedies of Nechepso that he had studied in Alexandria. Soon the god appeared in a spectacular vision and spoke to Thessalos, telling him that the book of king Nechepso was of limited use, because it required supplementary knowledge of the correct times at which to harvest the herbs – knowledge that could only be acquired directly from Asclepius himself. Thessalos claims, of course, that the material collected in his treatise on astrological botany was in fact written down during this session with the god and therefore far superior to Nechepso's book and any other.

This Nechepso was a pseudonymous Hellenistic literary figure to whom great wisdom in matters of astrology was attributed.⁵⁹ In Thessalos' self-aggrandizing narrative, however, the Alexandrian sage proves to be insufficient, and it is no coincidence that Thessalos turns his search for knowledge toward the south, toward Upper Egypt. In the passage from Alexandria to Thebes, a geography of cultural authenticity is invoked. Upper Egypt was in many respects "more Egyptian" than the Delta and Faiyum regions, which had been more thoroughly penetrated by Greek settlers in the Ptolemaic period. Studies of ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt have detected a general tendency toward adopting Egyptian names and language among Greek settlers in the predominantly Egyptian milieu of Upper Egypt.⁶⁰ Thebes itself was the center of several native Egyptian revolts in the second and first centuries BC, one of which resulted in a twenty-year period of revived Pharaonic rule over the Thebaid.⁶¹ The great seat of the god Ammon, therefore, was a focus of native resistance to foreign rule and the preservation of cultural identity. Thessalos expressly describes Thebes as "the oldest city of Egypt, containing many temples" and observes that "there were many scholarly high priests [there] and [elders] adorned with subtle learning."⁶² A couple of centuries after Thessalos' visit, Thebes does indeed seem to have been a center in which traditional magico-religious knowledge was preserved. The Anastasi papyri, which comprise the bulk of the ritual materials known as the Greek and Demotic magical papyri, are Theban in origin.⁶³ This later reputation of Thebes was, it seems, already established in Thessalos' day. The city serves in his narrative as the geographic and cultural location in which revelation is to be found.

When he reaches this great center, however, Thessalos' difficulties are only beginning. He encounters resistance from the Theban priests as he seeks their expertise, and Thessalos' eventual success in the face of this resistance is critical to the initiation narrative. The priests' reaction to Thessalos' inquiry has been a focus of debate over the interpretation of this text. It has been suggested that the reaction of the priests to Thessalos' propositions derived from a lost faith in the efficacy of traditional ritual powers.⁶⁴ This interpretation of the admittedly difficult Greek,⁶⁵ seems to put too much weight on a fourteenth century Latin translation, which though a century earlier than the best Greek manuscripts is a very loose approximation of the Greek text.⁶⁶ It seems unlikely that the priests were ridiculing Thessalos for his continued belief in the extinct power of magic. The traditional religious and magical practice of Egypt, which serves as the background to Thessalos' narrative, was still quite vigorous.⁶⁷ Some scholars, on the other hand, have proposed that the priests' indignation and unwillingness to help Thessalos was a reflection of their fears of prosecution on charges of magic.⁶⁸ While it is true that Thessalos seeks "some magical operation" (*ti tês magikês energeias*), it is doubtful whether Egyptian priests would have viewed the procedure by which Thessalos acquires a revelation as magical in the illicit and subversive sense.⁶⁹ A priest such as the one with whom Thessalos dealt in Thebes would have produced this ritual within an entirely different cognitive framework, by virtue of the fact that he was still an Egyptian priest, and that the divination rite (*peb-netjer*), which he performed fell into a clearly defined sphere of traditional priestly activity.⁷⁰ If, in fact, these rites were viewed as illicit, it could only have been from the perspective of Roman political and judicial authorities. Despite their own beliefs, Egyptian priests may have feared prosecution through Roman misunderstanding of their religious activities. Roman attitudes and legal restrictions, it has been argued, may have driven certain Egyptian religious practices "underground," to be practiced away from the potential scrutiny of Roman officials.⁷¹ Nevertheless, Roman regulation of Egyptian religion, despite progressive economic and social restrictions on the Egyptian priesthood, does not seem to have included specific legislation against the practices of Egyptian religion before the end of the second century.⁷² Thus, there is little reason to suppose that Egyptian priests would have feared prosecution on a day-to-day basis for carrying on traditional religious practices.

An alternative interpretation of the priests' unwillingness to assist Thessalos is more likely. The narrative makes more sense if the shocked reaction of the priests was not the result of fear or disbelief, so much as chagrin at the audacity (*propeteia*) of an outsider who wished entrée into the besieged yet still privileged world of the Egyptian priesthood and its ritual secrets.⁷³ An existing religious tendency to secrecy and esotericism, perhaps exaggerated by progressive Roman interference in the administration of Egyptian priesthoods, and later the practice of Egyptian religion itself, would have made the priests unwilling to allow any outsider, much less a foreigner,

to witness the mysteries of their ritual practice. Certainly, the Egyptian Demotic magical recipes that so closely resemble the *praxis* of Thessalos' revelation are written in a Demotic script that belongs to a priestly milieu.⁷⁴ They are consciously archaizing in their frequent use of hieratic signs, and some passages are written in an Egyptian cipher script, measures perhaps intended to protect the underground practice of Egyptian religion even from casual Egyptian knowledge.⁷⁵ But well before the historical conditions which produced the Demotic magical spells, there existed a priestly and cultural imperative to bar the uninitiated from Egyptian sacred rites and spaces. A number of texts, in addition to the inscriptions cited in the discussion of PGM I.1–42 above, convey the secrecy and exclusivity of Egyptian priests. A hieroglyphic and hieratic ritual papyrus of Persian or Ptolemaic date, contains a passage describing the temple scriptorium or "House of Life," as a place that must remain secret and closed to outsiders: "An Asiatic [a general term for foreigners from the East] must not enter it; he must not see it."⁷⁶ General injunctions to secrecy were inscribed on the doorposts of passages through which priests would enter the Ptolemaic temple of Edfu: "Do not reveal anything you see in the temple which is secret" and, "Be discreet at the appearance in his sacred throne; do not go out with what you have seen."⁷⁷ The latter is especially pertinent to Thessalos' vision of the enthroned Asclepius (Imhotep). A text from one of the crypts of the Graeco-Roman temple of Hathor at Dendera reads, "No Phoenician should approach it, no Greek enter it, no Bedouin tread it, its magic (*beka*) should not be seen within it."⁷⁸ This and other more or less contemporary expressions of the same sentiment provide the best cultural and historical explanation for the reaction of the Egyptian priests to Thessalos' inquiries. Their indignation and unwillingness to provide a direct revelation to the Greek doctor derives from traditional religious restrictions on entering sacred space, and viewing manifestations of the divinity.⁷⁹

Though this evidence of a traditional priestly tendency towards secrecy supplies the necessary cultural information to understand the shocked reaction of the Theban priests at Thessalos' initial inquiries, it does not explain the non-traditional activity of the one priest who actually does perform a *peb-netjer* rite for the Greek physician. The secrecy which surrounds Thessalos' solicitation of this one priest, and the peripheral place of its performance are neither traditional secrecy, aimed at protecting the rite from non-priests and outsiders, nor avoidance of Roman prosecution. They are necessitated by the Egyptian priest's transgression of an Egyptian priestly restriction in order to provide a ritual service for a non-priest and a foreigner. Thessalos and the priest must be circumspect because of the disapproval of the other priests. The narrative at several points draws attention to Thessalos' transgression of normal restrictions on contact with the divine, and his infiltration of the Egyptian priest's secretive domain. He not only tells how he circumvented the secrecy of the Egyptian priesthood by finding a priest who was willing

to assist him in his inquiries, he also claims that he hid on his person papyrus and pen to record the knowledge he hoped to gain (Book 1, *proem.* 21); and that, at the last minute, he sprang on the apparently unsuspecting priest a request for a direct encounter “one on one” with Asclepius (*ibid.* 22: *monôi moi pros monon*). Thessalos’ narrative portrays the priest as visibly upset at this imposition (*ibid.* 23: “Even so he was not pleased [*oukêh bêdeôs*] for the features of his face revealed this”). The direct encounter with the god removes the mediating function of the priest, gaining for Thessalos a quasi-priestly status. Thessalos, after all, is telling the tale of his revelation experience with the intention of establishing his authority, and thereby adding value to his treatise on magico-medicinal uses of plants. This value derives not only from the status and cultural location of the Egyptian priest as a guardian of exotic eastern wisdom, but also Thessalos’ claimed success in manipulating the priest in order to appropriate his status. From Thessalos’ perspective, in other words, this is the story of “how I went to great lengths to trick one of those notoriously tight-lipped Egyptian priests into initiating me into divine revelations normally reserved for that secretive priesthood – revelations which I can now pass on to you, the reader.”

Unfortunately, the Greek manuscript⁸⁰ breaks off in the fourth chapter of the first book, so the results of the initiation process are not entirely certain. Two Latin versions of Thessalos’ narrative, however, continue the story after Asclepius’ revelation of magico-medical wisdom.⁸¹ These manuscripts contain some errors of translation when comparison with the Greek text is possible, but their contents are worth cautious consideration.⁸² In section 15 of the epilogue, immediately following his account of the god’s revelation, Thessalos writes: “Having spoken these words, the god ascended to heaven. And so I returned with the priest in the middle of the night, and on the following day, receiving money sufficient for myself, as well as some requisites, I was dismissed by the priest.”⁸³ In this brief conclusion to the initiation process, the narrator seems to portray himself as a pupil who has completed his course of study with the master, and graduates with everything necessary to take up his new vocation.⁸⁴ Thessalos, however, seems to push his new status a little further. He asks the priest to accompany him to Alexandria in order to test the magical remedies revealed by the god, and they depart from Thebes almost as colleagues. In Alexandria, Thessalos does seem to have acquired greater authority, and the last scenes of the narrative show him demonstrating his powers and amazing the doubters. The defeat and disillusionment with which he began his quest for magical power are replaced by apparent success and prestige in the great transcultural center of the Hellenistic world.⁸⁵ Thessalos the Greek doctor has been elevated to the status of magician by penetrating the secret world of the Egyptian priests, and gaining a direct encounter with the divine.

Just as Thessalos is transformed by his infiltration of the Egyptian priesthood, the status of the Egyptian priest and his religious practice is

transformed when implicated in Thessalos' initiation narrative. The Egyptian priest's divination ritual is understood as a means of access to the divine, and when Thessalos claims to have entered the purified space and confronted the god directly, he is assuming the role of the Egyptian priest as mediator between the divine and human worlds. Thessalos, however, from his Graeco-Roman perspective represents this privilege of access and the status it implies as the source of his authority in matters magical. The transformation from oracular religious rite to magical initiation in the context of a cross-cultural encounter is not solely a passive function of the cultural distance between Thessalos and the priest, but a strategy on the part of the narrator to repackage a quasi-priestly status as magical in order to enhance the authority of the text. The entire narrative is framed as a letter to the Emperor, in which Thessalos professes to have defeated all rivals in his field, including the pseudonymous king Nechepso, thereby establishing himself as the preeminent arbiter of magical knowledge, a connoisseur of the transmundane, and a merchant of foreign wisdom. There is, in other words, an active dimension to the commonplace that one culture's religion is another's magic. "Magic" in the Hellenistic world is not only a polemical category, but also an appropriative category. The magical initiation, in this case, is created out of a tendentious reinterpretation of the Egyptian priestly structures of inclusion and exclusion.

Conclusion

Both the ritual and the narrative of magical initiation I have explored share a central concern with direct access to the divine, the *sine qua non* of authentic magical power in the vertical and utopian cosmological arrangements of Late Antiquity. Yet each derives the basic premises of its ritual pattern from a transvaluation of archaic Egyptian religious elements. In the first example, the practitioner contrives an encounter with the divine through the miniaturization of central elements of the Egyptian temple. He creates a divinized image of the god in the form of a mummified falcon, and sets it up in its own miniature shrine. By fabricating this locus of divine access, and invoking the god to descend to him in that place and grant him supernatural power, he takes over the logic of traditional Egyptian priestly initiation, as embodied in the term *besi*. As J.Z. Smith has suggested, the reduction in scale evident in the magical papyri requires at the same time a selection and exaggeration of the significant or the essential in the traditional temple-based rituals. Since ritual, in the first case, is a miniaturization and exaggeration of everyday actions, the texts of the magical papyri represent a meta-ritual discourse.⁸⁶ In the case of the initiation described in *PGMI*.1–42, the structure and details of the rite reveal a second order awareness of the essential elements in Egyptian priestly initiation. Rather than the liminality often regarded as typical of the ritual process in modern scholarly discourse

on initiations, the primary concern in the emic meta-ritual discourse of this text is entering into sacred space, and approaching the divine image. The Thessalos narrative, likewise, shows an awareness of these privileges of the priestly initiate, though from the perspective of an outsider. The status created by the exclusive prerogatives and secrecy of the Egyptian priesthood is appropriated for Thessalos' own purposes, and only through its implication in his narrative does it become "magical" and acquire a liminal quality according to a Graeco-Roman cultural perspective. In both cases, the spatial metaphor of the *rite de passage*, so insightfully elaborated by Van Gennep, and so clear in the traditional "day of introduction" (*herv en bes*) of the Egyptian priest, structures the differentiation of status. One is "in" or "out". But the transformation of this traditional structure, and its use in new narratives and rituals, suggest that a theoretical understanding of initiation as a category is not solely the prerogative of the modern scholar.

Notes

- 1 See the contribution of Graf to this volume on the application of this sense of the term "initiation" to classical Greek evidence.
- 2 On the social place of magic and the magical practitioner, see especially Mauss (1972). Bronislaw Malinowski considered initiation "typically religious" – that is to say, social – inasmuch as it serves to reproduce and reinforce the practices, knowledge and cultural values of a group and its civilization. Within the framework of definitions of religion and magic that rely on a dichotomy between the primarily social qualities of the former, and the individualistic, self-interested motives of the latter, Malinowski distinguished religious rites such as initiation from the more functional rites of magic. Malinowski (1948) 38–40.
- 3 Van Gennep (1909) 17 and 152–5, quoted in part by Grottanelli in this volume.
- 4 Graf (1994).
- 5 This approach draws on the arguments of Smith (1995), to whom I refer in more detail below. Graf's contribution to this volume raises Brelich's notion of "rites with an initiatory background" or "rites developed out of an initiatory context." In this chapter, I shall develop observations along these lines, though emphasizing the conscious adaptation of existing structures in the creation of new rituals or narratives, rather than historical development or evolution.
- 6 Graf (1994) 169 and (1997) 109ff. For the text, see Preisendanz (1973) 1.2–5; translated in Betz (1992) 3–4.
- 7 The same ritual prescription also appears in the Demotic magical papyri. See *PDM* xiv.88 in Betz (1992).
- 8 The Greek participle *anapodisas* is translated as "walking backwards" in both Preisendanz (1973) 5 and Betz (1992) 4, and this interpretation is followed by Graf (1994) 168; but Johnston (2002a) 354 n. 27 points out that this translation is incorrect and misleading. The use of the term does, however, suggest a deliberate action of walking or stepping back from the site of sacrifice. In the daily ritual of an Egyptian temple, the careful sweeping away of footprints upon leaving the sanctuary was called

- “Bringing the Foot”. See Erman and Grapow (1926–63) 1.91, and Nelson (1949). Perhaps the Greek verb *anapodizein* describes a similar ritual action.
- 9 Graf (1994) 168.
 - 10 Graf (1994) 169
 - 11 The Greek at this point explicitly represents this process not simply as drowning but deification (*PGM* I.4–5): “Take a sacred falcon and deify it (*apoth[e]ôson*) in the milk of a black cow.” In general see *Ld.Ä* s.v. “Ertrinken/Ertränken”; Griffith (1909); Spiegelberg (1917); Griffiths (1970) 273.
 - 12 Herodotus 2.90: “When anyone, be he Egyptian or stranger, is known to have been carried off by a crocodile or drowned in the river itself, such a one must by all means be embalmed and tended as fairly as may be and buried in a sacred coffin by the townsmen of the place where he is cast up; nor may any of his kinsmen or his friends touch him, but his body is deemed something more than human, and is handled and buried by the priests of the Nile themselves.”
 - 13 See Griffith (1909).
 - 14 E.g. *PDM* xiv.88: “and cause him [the scarab beetle] to attain the status of *besy*”; cf. *PDM* xiv.376ff., 638–9.
 - 15 E.g., *PGM* V.269, 270.
 - 16 As it did for Hadrian’s beloved Antinous in 130 AD during the emperor’s celebrated journey along the Nile. See also the tale of Naneferkaptah in Setne I, in which the magician Naneferkaptah, his wife Ihwere, and their son Merib each become “praised ones of Re” upon falling in the Nile and drowning. For an English translation, see Lichtheim (1980) 127–37.
 - 17 Ritner (1993) 106–10, who also notes that the ingestion of Egyptianizing ram-, goat-, and bull-faced images is used for initiatory purposes in the “Eighth Book of Moses” (*PGM* XIII.31–7).
 - 18 In general, see Thompson (1988) 190–209, and Ray (1976) 136–46.
 - 19 Ray (1976) no. 19 Recto 4–8: “The benefit which is performed for the Ibis, the soul of Thoth, the three times great, is made (for) the Hawk also, the soul of Ptah, the soul of Apis, the soul of Pre, the soul of Shu, [the soul of Tefnut], the soul of Geb, the soul of Osiris, the soul of Horus, the soul of Isis, the soul of Nephthys, [the great gods (of) Egypt] the Ibis (and) the Hawk.” See also *ibid.* p. 137.
 - 20 See Nur-el-Din (1992) 253–4.
 - 21 One tradition reported by Pliny *Natural History* 8.184 (cf. Plutarch *Isis and Osiris* 56) holds that after twenty-five years of life the Apis bull was drowned, then embalmed and buried. There does not appear to be any Egyptian evidence to support this practice, but it is possible that the notion may have later influenced the *PGM* rite under discussion.
 - 22 *PGM* I.24: *lege antikrus autou tou pténou* . . .
 - 23 For the former, see the note of Ritner in Betz (1992) *ad loc.* Agathos Daimon had become a designation for several gods in Graeco-Roman Egypt.
 - 24 *Ld.Ä* s.v. “Harponknuphi.” The phrase also appears at *PDM* xiv.465 (col. XVI.6), as a Coptic gloss to a Demotic phrase written phonetically with a divine determinative. This suggests to me that in this case the phrase may have been retranscribed into Demotic from a Greek source.
 - 25 *Isis and Osiris* 21.
 - 26 Crum 1939 (368b).

- 27 *LdÄ* s.v. "Orion".
- 28 See Griffiths (1970) 372 for various references; in the litany of Re, Orion is identified with Osiris "Lo, King N knows what is there in the Netherworld! He is the great one, the lord of life, Osiris, the ruler of the West. He is like Osiris, his cleverness is like that of Osiris, his power is like that of Osiris, his might is like that of Osiris, his club is like that of the One at the Head of the West. His scepter is that of Orion." See Piankoff (1964) 39 for the text and his notes. Cf. Pyramid Texts §882bc: "Thou art the great star, the companion of Orion, who traverses the sky with Orion, who travels over the Netherworld with Osiris."
- 29 *PGM* I.30–6 (trans. O'Neil in Betz [1992]) "[you who lie] in the north, / who cause [the] currents of [the] Nile to roll down and mingle with the sea, [transforming them with life] as it does man's seed in sexual intercourse, you who have established the world on an indestructible . . . [foundation], who are young in the morning and [old in the evening], who journey through the subterranean sphere and [rise], breathing fire, you who have parted the seas in the first / month, who [ejaculate] seeds into the [sacred fig] tree of Heliopolis continually. [This] is your authoritative name: *arbatb abaôth bakchabrê*."
- 30 See Nur-el-Din (1992) for inscriptions on ibis coffins from Tûna el-Gebel.
- 31 The dates are given by Kruchten (1989) 239–43, who suggests that the absence of "textes d'introduction" later than the Third Intermediate period could be explained by a change in recording practice, rather than an institutional or religious change. The practice of recording these initiations may also relate to the historical conditions of the Third Intermediate period. The hereditary principle of the Egyptian priesthood familiar from Herodotus developed only late in Egyptian history (ca. Dynasty XX). Moreover, with the advent of Libyan influence in the Twenty-Second Dynasty, there was a great concern among the priesthood for defining the legitimacy of their priestly status through elaborate genealogical records. The records of the "Day of Introduction" (*herv en bes*) stem, no doubt from the same impulse. Nevertheless, there is some evidence of continuity in the practice in the form of Demotic graffiti at Medinet Habu which record the initiation of priests. See Thissen (1989) 18–29 especially p. 21, n. 1.
- 32 The "god's-father" Pa-di-Amun addresses those who will follow in his footsteps: "O you who will come after me and enter into Ipet-Sut (the temple of Karnak), that is the Ennead of the living (gods)" Kruchten (1989) fragment 1, p. 28. The vizier Harsiese describes his introduction "into the great and venerable seat of Amun, which is the sky/heaven" – Kruchten (1989) fragment 7, p. 62. The initiation, therefore, is envisioned in decidedly vertical terms. The passage is from below to on high, a quality which is evident in the architecture of late sanctuaries such as the Ptolemaic temple of Horus at Edfu, where the ground level gradually rises along the primary axis as one approaches the inner *naos*.
- 33 Gardiner's sign-list (1957) K5.
- 34 The term could be qualified by the adjectives for "secret" or "holy", but on its own, the *bes*-image carried connotations of secrecy and exclusivity. See Wilson (1997) 331.
- 35 There is even a pun on this association in *Edfu* VIII 145, 5; see Wilson (1997) 331–2.
- 36 Hornung (1976) 42: "May you introduce the king X, may you cause him to go to heaven."
- 37 For the hieroglyphic text of the Canopus decree, see *Urk.* II.124–54; the examples cited are at lines 23 and 16. Scenes of the introduction of the pharaoh into the presence of the god are relatively common in temple reliefs, and were continued without interruption

- into the Hellenistic period, beginning with Alexander the Great. A relief on the sanctuary of Alexander at Luxor shows the Macedonian conqueror as a pharaoh being introduced (*bes*) into the presence of the god Amun. For bibliography, see Porter and Moss (1972) 324–5.
- 38 Lines 14 and 34. Curiously, the term does not appear to have been retained in the Demotic script. At the relevant places in the Canopus decree, *bes* is replaced with a more prosaic turn of phrase in Demotic. For example, at line 34 *bes sen* (“they were initiated”) is rendered “they became priests.” In one instance the relationship between initiation and the priestly prerogatives of entering the temple and performing rites there are made explicit. The decree proclaims the creation of a fifth phyle of priests in honor of Berenice, and the privileges to be accorded these priests, who “shall share . . . in every rite of entering (*bes*) in order to perform rites of purification in the temple” (line 16). The Demotic version leaves out the term *bes*, and states only that the priests shall have a share in “the rites of purification.” The Greek likewise only states *metekhein de kai tous ek tēs pemptēs phulēs . . . tōn hagneiōn*. I know of no other certain attestations of the term in Demotic. A possible late reference to a *bes*-image in a second-century CE papyrus may refer to an image of the god Bes; see Reymond (1977) 111–16. Another possible attestation (also second century CE) may fall into the same category; see Reymond (1977) 66–7 and 104. A tantalizing possibility exists in a suitable initiatory context at col. 1, l.12 of the Demotic story of Setne Khamwas and Si-Osire, but the word transliterated as *bes* by Griffith (1900) is damaged, and the writing is uncertain in any case.
- 39 Several references in Wilson (1997) 331.
- 40 *Dendera* I.42.9 (text in Cauville [1998]); X.13.4; X.268.13 (in Cauville [1997]). Note also *Dendera* I, pl. 64d, discussed by Sauneron (1962), which forbids the initiation (*bes*) of anyone who is not literate.
- 41 See Derchain (1990).
- 42 Derchain (1990) 234 translates “En ce qui concerne le «Château de l’Or» et la naissance des idoles . . . il y a là: [there follows a list of craftsmen] en tout douze hommes en service mensuel, soit en tout 48 hommes. Ils ne sont pas initiés (*bes*) auprès du dieu. Ce sont eux qui font venir au monde les statues. Il est inaccessible comme les statues de tout dieu qui se trouve dans le temple . . . Quand on en vient à l’Œuvre secret en toute chose, c’est l’affaire des officiants initiés auprès du dieu, qui sont membres du clergé . . .”
- 43 See Derchain (1990) 227–8.
- 44 The translation in Betz (1992) 164–5 is misleading, since it presumes that *ouphôr* is the name of a divinity invoked. For the derivation of *ouphôr*, see Thissen (1991) 299–300 and Vergote (1961) 213–14. As Ritner has noted in Betz (1992) *ad loc.*, the second part of the *ouphôr* is a series of invocations each beginning with *êi ieou*, a Greek transliteration of the Egyptian phrase “O, hail!”. There are several other names and words in this hymn which appear to be of Egyptian origin. See Thissen, *op. cit.*
- 45 Smith (1995) 20ff.
- 46 The absence of “integration”, as noted by Graf (1994) 169–70, while it does perhaps reflect the solitary nature of the rite, is perhaps also due to the vertical nature of the rite – any *réaggregation* is with the gods, through a common meal. In priestly terms this was indicated by partaking of the offerings to the god (note one priestly initiate’s concern to be included in the sacrificial offering; Kruchten [1989] 62–3).
- 47 Friedrich (1968) 43–65.

- 48 On revelation and divine wisdom as part of an initiation experience, cf. Grottanelli in this volume.
- 49 Lucian *Philopsuedes* 34–6, briefly discussed by Graf (1994) 161.
- 50 The comments of Ritner (1993) 219–20, and (1995) 3356–8 respond to the essay of J.Z. Smith (1978), in which the latter explored a shift from *locative* to *utopian* modes of religious practice – from the temple to the magician – as the locus of access to the divine.
- 51 See Moyer (2003).
- 52 Examples of this sort of tale are found in Plutarch *Moralia* 410a–b and 421a–b; Justin *Dialogue with Trypho* 1–8; and Harpocration *Cyranides* (prologue 30–68 = Kaimakis [1976] 15–17); more comical versions are found in Lucian *Menippus*, (Ps.)-Lucian *Onos*, and Apuleius *Metamorphoses*. For parallels to the spiritual quest in search of the alien wisdom of Egypt, see the Ps.-Clementine *Recognitions*, and Lucian *Philopseudes* 34–6. A native Egyptian parallel is found in the story of Setne Khamwas and Naneferkaptah; for an English translation, see Lichtheim (1980) 127–37.
- 53 “(1) . . . Many in their lives have tried, august Caesar, to deliver many marvelous things, and not a one has been able to bring his undertakings to completion, owing to the darkness of fate pressing upon their thoughts, but I believe I alone of the men of this age have been able to accomplish something marvelous [and known to few].” Thessalos, Book 1, *proem* 1 (= Friedrich [1968] 45).
- 54 Thessalos, Book 1, *proem*. 3–6 (Friedrich [1968] 45–7).
- 55 The translation of this phrase poses some difficulty. I have more or less followed Festugière (1939) 60, who translated the phrase “*epangelias omoias tēi propeteia mou [epi]pherontōn*” as “s’indignaient de ma témérité à concevoir de telles espérances” considering the construction a variant of *pherein* with an adverb (*kbalepōs*, e.g.) and the dative case. Cf. *LSJ* s.v. *pherō* III.2. Cumont (1918) 92 seems to have favored the restoration [*epi]pherontōn*, translating “reprochent.”
- 56 Thessalos, Book 1 *proem*. 12–14 (= Friedrich [1968] 49–51).
- 57 Thessalos, Book 1 *proem*. 22 (= Friedrich [1968] 53).
- 58 Many of the words and phrases in the Greek magical papyri described originally by Preisendanz as “Zauberworte” have, on closer examination, turned out to be transcriptions of Egyptian words or divine names; see the notes of Ritner in Betz (1992) *passim*.
- 59 On the identity of Nechepso, see Fraser (1972) I.437, who follows Kroll *RE* 16.2160–7; cf. Ray (1974), and Krauss and Fecht (1981).
- 60 Lewis (1986) 155; Goudriaan (1988) 91.
- 61 The Theban dynasty of Haronnophris and Chaonnophris (205–186 BCE) is treated by Pestman (1995). For the subsequent revolts led by Petosiris in 164 and Harsiesis in 130 BCE, see Turner (1984) 162 and Thompson (1984) 313. According to Pausanias 1.9.3, a final Theban revolt against the Ptolemies in 88 BCE resulted in considerable damage to the city. Thompson (1984) 316–17.
- 62 Thessalos, Book 1, *proem*. 12.
- 63 See Tait (1995), and Fowden (1986) 186ff. Johnson (1976) concludes on the basis of Demotic orthography and morphology and the dialect of Coptic glosses that the Demotic magical papyrus of London and Leiden was indeed written in the Theban area. Fowden (1986) 173 links the Theban magical archive, the alchemical papyri of Leiden and Stockholm, and the Nag Hammadi Gnostic library as products of an Upper Egyptian milieu related to Hermetism.

- 64 Smith (1978) 179.
- 65 See n. 53 above.
- 66 The Latin phrase *et quidam eorum faciebant ridiculum de me* ("and some of them mocked me") is clearly a gloss for the rather more obscure Greek in Thessalos *proem.* 13 (see Friedrich [1968] 50). Though Friedrich and others have used the Latin manuscript (Codex Montepessulanus fac. med. 277) to provide restorations elsewhere, it is in general more abbreviated than the Greek – especially here. Smith (1978) 179 n. 33, however, considers this an apt paraphrase. He also emphasizes that the priest who comes to Thessalos' aid "gives Thessalos the 'assurance' (a term which makes sense only if the interpretation of Thessalos' audacity just offered be accepted) that he has the power to produce a vision . . ." At *proem.* 14, however, the term is simply *epéngeilato*, "professed." Perhaps the term *parégorésas* "comforted, consoled" in *proem.* 18 is meant. There, however, the context is Thessalos' emotional appeal to the priest.
- 67 Ritner (1995) 3357, who notes that the Egyptian concept of *beka* continued to be of religious importance in the Roman period. See also Ritner (1998) 9, and Frankfurter (1998) 37ff. and 199 for further evidence of the vitality of Egyptian religion. Second-century literary discussions portray the religion and priests of Egypt as active: Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris*; Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 6.4.35, 37; *Paed.* 3.2.4; *Protrept.* 2.39.
- 68 Cumont (1918) 92 writes, "La plupart des prêtres lui reprochent de concevoir des espérances téméraires; car la magie était sous les Romains une science réprouvée, et l'exercice de cet art était sévèrement prohibé par les lois pénales." Cf. Festugière (1939) 60 n. 16; Graux (1878) 67f. Smith (1978) 179 rejects this interpretation, though it has been revived by Ritner (see below).
- 69 As Ritner (1993) 14–28 has shown, the Egyptian concept of "magic" (*beka*) was an important divine attribute and a divinity itself in religious texts as early as the Fifth Dynasty. Magic in the Egyptian understanding was clearly not illicit.
- 70 As argued by Ritner (1993) 219–20, and (1995) 3356–8. Thessalos' priest initially professed that he could procure a vision through lekanomancy (bowl divination). A number of such rituals, called *shen ben* or "vessel inquiry," are preserved in the Demotic magical papyri: *PDM* xiv.1–92; 239–95; 295–308; 395–427; 528–53; 627–35; 670–4; 695–700; 805–40; 841–50; 851–5; 1110–29. When the appointed day arrives, however, Thessalos requests a direct interview with the god, and in the description of the revelation that follows there is no mention of a bowl. In the Demotic magical papyri, such a rite in which the god is seen in a direct vision is usually called a *peb-netjer* ("god's arrival"). See Johnson (1977), the original publication of the text appearing in Betz (1992) as *PDM* Suppl. The term appears as follows: *PDM* xiv.117 (5/1), 145 (5/29), 170 (6/20), 176 (6/26), 232 (8/12), 828 (27/24), 833 (27/29), 836 (27/32); *PDM* Suppl. 130, 149, 168. Numbers in parentheses refer to column and line number of *PDM* xiv as published in Griffith and Thompson (1905). The *peb-netjer* was a type of rite, which from the New Kingdom onward consisted of an oracular petition to a divine image. This was a normal religious method of making decisions and seeking the help or advice of a divinity in Egyptian religion.
- 71 Ritner (1995) 3355–6.
- 72 In 199 AD, Q. Aemilius Saturninus issued a prohibition of several native Egyptian forms of divination, which is preserved in *P. Yale* inv. 299, for which see Paráglossou (1976). The efficacy of such decrees is not beyond doubt, however, and some prohibited practices seem to have continued after this legislation. See Frankfurter (1998) 153ff.

- 73 This interpretation was originally proposed by Ritner (1993) 219 n. 102 and (1995) 3357.
- 74 See n. 68 above.
- 75 See, e.g. Johnson (1992) lv; and Ritner's comments (1995) 3356.
- 76 *P. Salt* 825 (= B.M. 10051) VII.5; Derchain (1965) 140 and 168. In this regard, it is relevant to note that the downfall of Setne Kham was in the tale of Setne and Naneferkaptah begins just after the phrase (Setne I 4/38) "there was no occupation on earth for Setne besides unrolling the scroll [of Thoth] and reading it to everyone"; for an English translation see Lichtheim (1980) 133.
- 77 The former text is among the general injunctions on the south doorpost of the eastern entrance to the pronaos (Chassinat 1928) 360.12–362.4 and Alliot 1954: 185; and the latter is among the texts on the north doorpost of the southeastern entrance to the courtyard (Chassinat 1930: 343.13–344.11). For translations of both texts, see Kurth (1994) 148 and 151. Another injunction to maintaining ritual secrecy is found in the above mentioned ritual papyrus; see Derchain (1965) 139. Other examples are also noted in Ritner (1993) 203–4; see especially the Esna inscription 197, l.20, in Sauneron (1968) 12: "Do not permit any Asiatic to enter the temple whether he be old or young."
- 78 Chassinat (1952) 60/10–61/2. See also *ibid.* 54, lines 6–8, and 97, l.4.
- 79 Assmann (1992) 11 remarks that Late Period Egyptian temples differ from earlier ones in the box principle of their design. At Edfu, for example, five concentric walls and intervening zones protect the inner sanctuary from the outside world. The traditional idea of unapproachability and secretness was exacerbated in later periods by a "Profanationsangst".
- 80 Codex Matritensis Bibl. nat. 4631 (T).
- 81 Codex Montepessulanus fac. med 277 (M), and Codex Vindobonensis 3124 (V).
- 82 See above, p. 14.
- 83 Thessalos, Epilogue 15 (M): *his autem dictis deus in celum ascendit. et sic reversus sum in media nocte ad sacerdotem et in die crastino recipiens aurum mihi sufficiens et res necessarias licentiatum sum a sacerdote.* (V): *quibus dictis deus ascendit in celum. et sic reversus sum media nocte cum sacerdote et die crastina recipiens aurum mihi sufficiens et res necessarias licentiatum sum a sacerdote.* Friedrich (1968) 271–2.
- 84 The term *licentiatum* in this medieval Latin translation of the Greek text, may simply mean "dismissed," but it is also tempting to read it in the sense of the medieval licentiate, which conferred permission to teach. Perhaps underlying this paraphrase is an element of the Greek text, which suggested the formalization of a new status or the completion of the initiation.
- 85 M (epilogue 16): *"verum tamen rogabam ipsum, ut veniret mecum, ut probaremus simul virtutes herbarum traditarum a deo, postquam venerit tempus collectionis"* ("Nevertheless, I asked him to come with me, so that we could demonstrate together the powers of the plants transmitted by the god, after the time for gathering came.") V (epilogue 16–19): *"rogavi tamen ipsum, ut veniret ad probandum mecum virtutem herbarum a deo mihi traditarum. et postquam advenit tempus colligendi herbas, veni in Alexandriam et colligens herbe sucum habentis maiorem probavi virtutem et inveni sicut dictum est. admiratus sum et sic expertus sum virtutem omnium in spatio anni unius et certificatus scripsi librum, per quem promisi hominem in spatio brevi medicum facere. quidam tamen ignorantes virtutem herbarum, que tradite erant per librum, reprebendebant nescientes finem, sed [postquam] tempus advenit, probavi coram eis, sicut promisi, et certificati sunt"* ("Nevertheless, I asked him to come so as to prove with me the power of the herbs transmitted to me by the god. And after the time for collecting herbs arrived, I came

to Alexandria and collecting plants containing sap, I demonstrated the greater power and found it to be as was proclaimed. I was astonished and so I tested the power of them all in the space of one year and having become convinced, I wrote a book, through which I promised to make a man a doctor in a short time. Some, however, ignorant of the power of the plants transmitted in the book were full of reproach, not knowing the result, but [after] the time came, I demonstrated it before them, just as I promised and they were convinced.”)

86 Smith (1995) 27.

Part VII

AFTERWORDS

THE INITIATORY PARADIGM IN ANTHROPOLOGY, FOLKLORE, AND HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

Bruce Lincoln

Almost without exception, the papers included in this volume voice reservations and second thoughts about the category of initiation, although some are more thoroughgoing in their skepticism than others. But since there seems to be general – and growing – dissatisfaction, it is worth reflecting a bit on the genealogy of scholarship on this topic.

I

As I understand it, that genealogy involves three major lines of development, each of which has its own interest and problems. One begins with Heinrich Schurtz's *Älterklassen und Männerbünde* (1902) and Hutton Webster's *Primitive Secret Societies* (1908), works treating the collective rituals that introduce young men and women into sex-specific age-grade groups in pre-modern societies. Far from symmetrical in their treatment of gender, however, Schurtz (1863–1903) and Webster (1875–1955) focused prime attention on the male groups thus formed, which they saw as the basis of religious, military and political institutions at the level of the tribe that ultimately gave rise to the state.¹ German scholars of the interwar period, picking up on similar ideas in Nietzsche,² found this latter point attractive and many saw cultic bands of ecstatic warriors as something characteristic of the Germanic people and their primordial (i.e. “racial”) ancestors.³ Moreover, in paramilitary groups like the Freikorps, Wandervögel, SA, SS, and Hitler Jugend, they saw contemporary echoes of this process.

A number of authors, particularly Lily Weiser (1898–1987), Otto Höfler (1901–87), and others who trained under Rudolf Much (1862–1936) at the University of Vienna were concerned to locate such patterns and processes in Germanic antiquity as reported by Tacitus and reflected in Old Norse literature.⁴ Following their lead, others sought to identify warrior initiation

and martial cult-groups in the mythic prehistory of other “Aryan” (or Indo-European) peoples, a project in which scholars outside Germany also cooperated. Among these, one could cite the work of several Swedish Iranists at Uppsala University (where Höfler taught from 1928–31),⁵ Marie-Louise Sjoestedt (1900–40) on the Celts,⁶ Georges Dumézil (1898–1986) on Rome,⁷ and Henri Jeanmaire (1884–1960) on Greece.⁸ Works of this sort have had lasting influence on the mythopoetic men’s movement of Robert Bly (1926–) and others who play at recuperating an aggressive masculinity in a post-feminist era. More seriously, Jeanmaire and Dumézil had importance for Pierre Vidal-Naquet’s *Chasseur noir* (1981), a work of an entirely different political character, for all that it too occasionally revels in the Nietzschean freedom, energy, and violence of the young men’s societies typified by the Spartan *krypteia* and Athenian *ephebia*.⁹

II

A second line of discourse on initiation, which interacts at points with the first, begins with René Guénon (1886–1951), Julius Evola (1898–1974), and other authors who styled themselves “traditionalists” devoted to the preservation and advancement of *philosophia perennis*. Taking their initial lead from the importance initiatory rituals had for older generations of occultists and esotericists,¹⁰ these authors went further and railed against the modern world’s decadence, salvation from which, they argued, could be obtained only through secret ancient wisdom, as preserved in a few privileged venues.¹¹ Although they differed about which groups actually possess such gnosis, all those of this school – which includes also such figures as Henri Corbin (1903–78), Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877–1947), and Frithjof Schon (1907–)¹² – shared a general disdain, even contempt, for modernity and a belief that the world’s fate depends on a spiritual elite, constituted as such largely through rituals of initiation that test and transform them ontologically, thereby qualifying them for access to esoteric knowledge.

Writings of this sort circulate largely outside the academy among discontented spirits and religious seekers who delight in submission to spiritual masters. Irrationalism and authoritarianism are redolent in the works of both Guénon and Evola, the latter of whom actively promoted a mystic style of fascism.¹³ Both authors have enjoyed renewed popularity in recent years, with a steady stream of translations and re-editions of their works making their way into New Age and New Right bookstores.¹⁴ Beyond this, their ideas also gained a slender foothold in the academy through the agency of Mircea Eliade (1907–86), who made his American debut with a series of lectures on initiation that drew heavily on the traditionalists’ ideas, while never citing them directly.¹⁵

This erasure reflected Eliade’s practice in the postwar period, although in the 1930s Eliade drew many of the key concepts he would employ thereafter

from the writings of Evola and Guénon, which he cited and reviewed with enthusiasm.¹⁶ Both before and after the war he also had direct contacts with Evola, who wrote to him on 15 December 1951 as follows:

It is striking that you take extreme care not to mention in your works any author who doesn't strictly belong to the most officious university literature, while one finds not a single word on M. Guénon, nor on other authors whose ideas are much closer to those that permit you to orient yourself securely in the materials you treat.¹⁷

Although Eliade's response has not survived, Evola wrote again sixteen days later, having obviously heard from him in the meantime.

As for your clarifications regarding your relations with the academic 'Masonry', I find them satisfying enough. This would be less a question of methodology than a pure tactic, and one can say nothing against the attempt to introduce several 'Trojan horses' into the citadel of the university.¹⁸

These letters have been much discussed, along with several others in a similar vein.¹⁹ Some, particularly authors sympathetic to Evola and Guénon, take Eliade to have been disingenuous: a timid man, afraid to cite his real masters by name, and wishing to deflect their rightful objections. Others take seriously his self-understanding as one who would infiltrate the academy and unleash ideas antithetic to its hegemonic liberal values. Both positions strike me as extreme. Rather, I am inclined to read *Birth and Rebirth: the Religious Meanings of Initiation in Human Culture* (1958), the book based on his Haskell lectures of 1956, as a seriously conflicted work, alternately bold and hesitating. If one of its multiple purposes was to mainstream the traditionalists' position, as seems likely, it did so only half-heartedly, as this came in conflict with other projects Eliade was simultaneously pursuing.

The book thus begins with an assertion consistent with the positions of Guénon and Evola, but one that Eliade carefully avoided making in his own voice:

It has often been said that one of the characteristics of the modern world is the disappearance of any meaningful rites of initiation. Of primary importance in traditional societies, in the modern Western world significant initiation is practically nonexistent.²⁰

Eliade's use of the term "traditional" here, as elsewhere, is also worth noting. Appearing frequently throughout the book, it seems near-synonymous to "premodern," which he defined as denoting Europe to the end of the Middle Ages and the rest of the globe until World War I.²¹ On

one occasion, however, Eliade employed “traditional” in close juxtaposition to “pre-Judaic,”²² and he always left the former term sufficiently unspecified to permit anyone so inclined to understand it as also including contemporary “traditionalist” groups, as in the following passage.

It is to this traditional knowledge that the novices gain access. They receive protracted instruction from their teachers, witness secret ceremonies, undergo a series of ordeals. And it is primarily these ordeals that constitute the religious experience of initiation – the encounter with the sacred. The central moment of every initiation is represented by the ceremony symbolizing the death of the novice and his return to the fellowship of the living. But he returns to life a new man, assuming another mode of being. Initiatory death signifies the end at once of childhood, of ignorance, and of the profane condition.²³

For all intents and purposes, this could be a description of Masonic lodges or occultist groups promising ontological transformation through initiation into ancient sacred wisdom. Throughout his discussion, Eliade stressed just this aspect: the production of a “new man” by ritual means.

The book is organized to treat initiatory rituals of varied types in an order that seems to suggest increasing complexity, value, and perhaps also historic development. Starting with puberty ceremonies of “primitive” peoples (pp. 1–60), it moves to the qualifying exploits of heroes and warriors (pp. 61–85), ordeals of shamans and religious virtuosi (pp. 85–102), then Mystery cults and patterns of initiation in “higher” religions (pp. 103–21). Ultimately, Eliade argued that “the final triumph of Christianity put an end to the mysteries and to the initiatory Gnosis,”²⁴ after which he returned to the traditionalists’ problematic: the situation of a modernity bereft of initiation (pp. 122–36). And here, where one might expect him to play the “Trojan horse” most aggressively, he failed to do so with any consistency. Rather, gesturing rapidly in several contradictory directions, he attempted to be all things to all people, while providing an upbeat closure for his lectures and volume. Having just argued that initiation is lost, he found it – or at least its meaningful traces – in all sorts of places: artisans’ guilds, secret societies, and occultist circles, to be sure, but also literature, movies and works of art, dream experience, psychotherapeutic practice (esp. that of Jung),²⁵ even the vicissitudes of normal existence, since “any genuine human life implies profound crises, ordeals, suffering, loss and reconquest of self, ‘death and resurrection.’”²⁶ Clearly, Eliade’s view of modernity was much more optimistic than that of Guénon, who saw it as the last phase of the Kali Yuga.²⁷ But he also took care to blur this difference, using the modifier “genuine” to signal that some human lives are not “genuine” at all, particularly in modernity. In which case, initiation – even of this most rudimentary sort – is once more construed as the

diagnostic mark that divides a profane, inauthentic modernity from its categoric opposite, available to all in the past, but in the present only to a privileged few.

III

Yet a third lineage of discourse on initiation, and one much more intellectually defensible than either of the others, is that which descends from Arnold Van Gennep's *Les rites de passage* (1909), a book best approached via its complex relation to the work of Emile Durkheim. As is well known, beginning in the late 1890s, Durkheim (1858–1917) first theorized religion not as a set of beliefs (animism, totemism, dynamism, henotheism, for example), but as the effective vehicle through which social groups constitute and maintain themselves as moral communities.²⁸ Consistent with this, he and his students then treated rituals of varied types as instruments through which groups evoke, model, and renew the sentiments of affinity on which the social depends.

As I understand it, Van Gennep (1873–1957) offered an important corrective to this paradigm, but one he articulated imperfectly and which, perhaps as a result, the Durkheimians were unable to appreciate. Neither by his training, nor by his personal associations was Van Gennep part of the Durkheimian circle, whose members waged a determined campaign in the early years of the twentieth century to create a place for themselves and their views in French academic life. As Van Gennep put it some years after the fact, “Anyone who was not a member of their group was a ‘marked man.’”²⁹

Such bitterness came of experience. In one of his first publications, *Mythes et légendes d'australie* (1906), Van Gennep had dared to voice criticisms of Durkheim, which the latter's students found disrespectful. Marcel Mauss (1872–1950) replied in a sharp review published the following year, just as the two men were rivals for a chair in ethnography and history of religions at the Collège de France.³⁰ Both were unsuccessful, as things turned out, but not equally so. Thus, Mauss was second in the balloting (to Jean Réville [1855–1908]), while Van Gennep placed last of the five candidates, failing to garner a single vote. His candidacy had been tepidly advanced by the great linguist Antoine Meillet (1866–1936), who was better disposed to Mauss in the last analysis, but who said of Van Gennep on that occasion: “Il est bien préparé à l'enseignement de l'histoire des religions et fait sur ce sujet des recherches personnelles de valeur.”³¹

Such “recherches personnelles” gave rise to *Les rites de passage*, which appeared in the wake of this election.³² In its pages, one can perceive the humiliated candidate reasserting his worth and demonstrating the original contributions he was prepared to offer. Here, it was his merit to recognize for the first time that a host of seemingly disparate rituals – initiations, weddings, investitures, birth ceremonies, funerals, etc. – all translate people

from one social status to another. Going further, he observed that as a result of this common purpose, such ceremonies also share the same patterned schema or structure, involving a sequence of three stages: 1) rites of separation or pre-liminal rites that remove people from their prior status; 2) rites of transition or liminal rites that subject them to transformative operations inside a symbolic border zone; and 3) rites of reaggregation or post-liminal rites that reintroduce them to society and insert them in new stations.

Notwithstanding the logical elegance of this schema, Van Gennep advanced his argument in the style of Frazer, introducing countless repetitive examples, all of which he treated superficially. This aspect of his work, which was tied up with Van Gennep's disciplinary identity as a folklorist, let the Durkheimians and their descendants dismiss him as having insufficient interest in, or grasp of, sociology to cash in on the possibilities he uncovered. But it also seems possible to me that Van Gennep deliberately left aspects of his analysis underdeveloped and subtextual, precisely because these posed a serious challenge to Durkheimian theory, which he wished to play down in order to avoid further estrangement.³³ In contrast to those of Durkheim's *équipe*, he implicitly understood the social not as a solidary phenomenon, held together by moral sentiments and periodic bursts of ritual effervescence, but as a hierarchic system marked by internal divisions, many of them associated with the life cycle. *Rites de passages*, then, he understood as instruments for moving people through a ranked series of discreet stations and one can go further still to argue that the rites also effectively constitute those stations and the distinctions among them.

While Van Gennep's intervention could – and should – have prompted a productive exchange with the Durkheimians, this never happened. In a somewhat condescending review, Mauss acknowledged aspects of his rival's contribution, but faulted him for his loose comparatism and his tendency to see the same pattern everywhere. Beyond this, he focused critical attention on the three-part schema, particularly its liminal phase. Mauss's own researches had led him to treat rituals in terms of the opposition between sacred and profane. Working with these categories, he distinguished “positive” rituals – consecration and the like – that moved subjects from the profane into the sacred, and “negative” ones that returned them to a profane life, transformed by the experience.³⁴ To separate one's self from one realm, he argued, was necessarily to enter the other, with no “liminal” space between them. The state of being a novice, a fiancée, or a corpse, for example, was not an interstitial condition in his view, but a status itself (albeit transient), marked as sacred by the heightened social interest attached to it.³⁵

Mauss's critique of Van Gennep frames an intriguing problematic: when and how can a social “no-where” be configured as a privileged “some-where:” a vital, dynamic space of transformation, invested with the aura of the sacred? How and when is such a some-where constructed as a radical no-where: an anomalous, amorphous betwixt and between? For decades, however, such

questions went begging. Frozen out of French university circles, Van Gennep taught for a brief time in Switzerland (1912–15), then made his career outside the academy, working within the state bureaucracy and writing encyclopedic works of limited theoretical ambition on French ethnography and folklore.³⁶ His influence was not nil, but it paled beside the Durkheimians' and his work remained little known outside France until it was championed by Max Gluckman and Victor Turner, starting in the late 1950s.

IV

As Professor of Social Anthropology at Manchester University, Gluckman (1911–75) worked largely within that version of the Durkheimian paradigm that was English structural-functionalism.³⁷ But as someone born and trained in South Africa, a Jew and a Marxist, he strained against some of its core tenets. In particular, Gluckman found it impossible to accept Durkheim's stress on social integration as the whole story. Tension and conflict being omnipresent in social life – as his South African experience taught him – they needed to be acknowledged and theorized adequately. Struggling to reconcile this perspective with Durkheimian orthodoxy, he argued that conflict was not necessarily antithetical to cohesion and solidarity. Rather, it could actually foster social unity if handled successfully, as in elections where rival parties compete for the same offices under the same system of rules and, as a result, reaffirm their commitments to and belonging in the same politico-moral community. Two institutionalized forms of practice struck him as particularly effective for the recuperation of conflict into social unity. Within modern societies, he argued, law performs just this service, while in pre-modern settings, ritual does much the same.³⁸

Although Gluckman carried out some pioneer studies of ritual,³⁹ his training was in law and legal anthropology became his prime area of activity. Accordingly, he charged Turner (1920–83), who worked under him first at the Rhodes-Livingston Institute and then at Manchester, with following through on ritual. Turner responded in superlative fashion and his dissertation on the ceremonies of the Ndembe people of central Africa remains the most thorough, perceptive, exquisitely nuanced, and analytically masterful study of ritual that has ever been written.⁴⁰ Neither Gluckman nor Turner took much notice of Van Gennep, however, until 1959, when Gluckman organized a series of lectures on rites of passage, just as arrangements were being made for translation of Van Gennep's opus.

Initially, Turner was not supposed to have a role in these lectures, which featured only anthropologists of professorial status: E.E. Evans-Pritchard, Meyer Fortes, Daryll Forde, and Gluckman himself. But when Evans-Pritchard departed from topic, Gluckman seized the opportunity to slip an essay by Turner (then still a lecturer), into the volume that was ultimately published.⁴¹ Even here, Turner made no use or mention of Van Gennep,

treating Ndembu circumcision rituals chiefly in terms of their symbolism.⁴² Gluckman, in contrast, gave Van Gennep the most serious attention he had received to date, although his judgement was quite mixed.⁴³ In addition to the standard criticisms of indiscriminate comparatism, tedious repetition, and inadequate sociological grounding, he added that the three-phase schema did little more than reframe the familiar Aristotelian point that every story has a beginning, middle, and end.⁴⁴ Further, he suggested that initiation and like rituals were chiefly of interest for historic and contrastive reasons. "In short," he wrote, "I consider that rituals of the kind investigated by Van Gennep are 'incompatible' with the structures of modern life. . . . Ritual, and even ceremonial, tend to drop into desuetude in the modern urban situation where the material basis of life, and the fragmentation of roles and activities, of themselves segregate social roles."⁴⁵

In the years following the Manchester series of lectures, an English translation of Van Gennep finally appeared and started to gain popularity.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, Turner continued his studies of Ndembu initiation (male and female) and went through numerous personal changes, involving a move from England to America (in 1964, after a year as a visitor in 1961), a full professorial chair, and a shift of allegiance from the Communist party to the Roman Catholic Church.⁴⁷ Apparently, he read Van Gennep with renewed interest during this period, and in 1964 he presented a paper in which he swept past the objections of Mauss and Gluckman, recognizing previously unappreciated depths and possibilities in Van Gennep's model.⁴⁸ Here, he spoke about ritual as an instrument of dynamism instead of homeostasis, and the liminal phase was the centerpiece of his discussion. The following passage summarizes the possibilities he perceived in it.

Jakob Boehme, the German mystic whose obscure writings gave Hegel his celebrated dialectical "triad," liked to say that "In Yea and Nay all things consist." Liminality may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions, but as in some sense the source of them all, and more than that, as a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise. I will not pursue this point here but, after all, Plato, a speculative philosopher, if there ever was one, did acknowledge his philosophical debt to the teachings of the Eleusinian and Orphic initiations of Attica.⁴⁹

In this essay, Turner theorized the liminal phase primarily as a space for creative reflection, where individuals stripped of their prior identities can imagine themselves and the world anew. In later writings, he pursued the social implications of the philosophico-theological notion he adapted from Boehme and Hegel, theorizing the liminal as the antithesis of normal life in society: the moment of radical anti-structure that inverts and annihilates old

structures and identities, so that new ones can be created. In 1966 he took this analysis further still in his Lewis Henry Morgan lectures. Here, he gave the liminal a utopian aura, treating it not just as an occasion for reflection and growth, but as a refuge from all considerations of status, a space and time of intimacy, egalitarianism, spontaneity, and humane authenticity: experiences he described with the term “*communitas*,” which became his hallmark and connoted everything he valued most deeply.⁵⁰

Of Turner’s four Morgan lectures, three focused exclusively on Ndembu rituals. The fourth, entitled “Liminality and *Communitas*” was much broader and it was this piece that best caught the spirit of the age and made him an intellectual celebrity. In the book published on the basis of these lectures, a clear caesura is evident between the scholar Turner had been and the one he was fast becoming. Here, the Ndembu material was cut to two chapters (one of the lectures having been dropped), while discussion of the liminal was expanded to three with the addition of two new pieces. Not coincidentally, in the latter section Turner’s exquisitely detailed African ethnographic accounts disappeared in favor of quick romps through more familiar, accessible, and sexier material, including, as he later put it “Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Bob Dylan, and such current phenomena as the Chicago Vice Lords and the California Hell’s Angels.”⁵¹

Even more than Eliade, Turner not only succeeded, but actively delighted in finding initiatory phenomena in modern society. In later writings, he would range ever wider (also more impressionistically and irresponsibly), finding liminality and *communitas* virtually everywhere: theatre, carnival, pilgrimage, religious renunciants, bands of guerillas, and (to cite him again) “shamans, diviners, mediums, priests, those in monastic seclusion, hippies, hoboes, and gypsies.”⁵² Beneath the surface of his texts there also lay Turner’s experience in London during the Blitz, where, as a conscientious objector to military service, he worked on the squad that defused unexploded German bombs. Facing the constant possibility of death, he and the others in this service shared a camaraderie, intimacy, and deep human bond in which all pretensions of class, rank, and status dissolved. It was this extraordinary experience he sought to recover in his later writings, which captured the imagination of an exuberant era that invented its own forms of *communitas* at Woodstock, Haight Ashbury, the événements of May ‘68, and other landmarks of the 1960s.

V

Classicists were no more immune to that spirit than anyone else, and scholarly work on Greek initiatory rituals followed in Turner’s wake. Although Eleusinian and Orphic initiations are a perennial subject of fascination and initiations of other sorts had occasionally been studied, Angelo Brelich gave new impetus to the topic with his bold attempt, inspired perhaps, by early

feminism, to recognize women's initiations in the Brauronia, *arrêphoria*, and elsewhere.⁵³ Other works quickly followed, culminating in Pierre Vidal-Naquet's *Chasseur noir* (1981), inspired by Lévi-Strauss and Jeanmaire as well as Turner and Van Gennep, which treated the ephebia as a state of liminal *communitas*, located between boyhood and maturity, nature and culture, the raw and the cooked.⁵⁴

The important chapters that Chris Faraone and Irene Polinskaya offer in this volume point out serious problems with Brelich and Vidal-Naquet, and others have demonstrated the even more grievous failings of other, lesser works. Gloria Ferrari and David Leitao offer novel and fascinating insights into less studied and less appreciated rites of passage, but one senses them to be swimming against the tide. Interest is fading in initiation, and given the genealogy I have traced above, it is hard not to sympathize.

The situation we now observe, however, seems less a paradigm shift than a change in fashion, accompanied and assisted by generational succession. For those who came of age in the 1960s, coming-of-age seemed a topic of world-shattering import. Turner, Van Gennep, and to a lesser extent Eliade, provided us with theory and language that enabled and ennobled us in that self-absorption. But as we boomers become geezers, age-transitions threaten us more and fascinate us less. As for those who are in the course of succeeding us, the topic of initiation holds limited interest. Although they may sense this only vaguely, its excitement (such as it is) radiates from a mythical moment they know only via the tired stories of their elders, whose work on this topic is ripe for critique.

If further studies are to improve on the flawed existing literature, I would think three corrections are in order. First, we should put an end to any lingering notions that initiatory rituals can produce transformation that is properly called ontological. Rituals can and do effect promotions within cultic and social hierarchies, while also producing desire and readiness for such mobility, as well as pride and satisfaction in its accomplishment. But insofar as ritual, scholarly, or any other discourse claims that ceremonies elevate human subjects to higher states of being, this should be recognized as mystification.

Second, we ought deromanticize discussions of liminality and recognize that there is nothing necessarily liberatory anti-structural, or communitarian about this stage of a ritual process. Asymmetries of power and status do not evaporate in the liminal period. Rather, as even Turner was forced to admit, a condition of the *communitas* experienced among novices is the absolute authority elders exercise over them.⁵⁵ As in Marine boot-camp (itself a form of initiation in the modern world), in many initiatory rituals authority is reduced to its simplest, bluntest, and potentially most brutal form: a sustained confrontation between those who give orders and others who are categorically obliged to submit, no matter how (literally) degrading those orders may be.

Third, there is need to fill in the sociological analysis left unfinished and subtextual in Van Gennep. This requires a significant analytic reorientation, for his approach implicitly assumed the perspective of individual initiands, as a means to chart their journey from one social status – and ritual phase – to another. Much has been learned from this, but we have long since reached the point of diminishing returns. As a complement, it would now be useful to adopt a macrosocial perspective so we can appreciate the way *rites de passage* regulate supply and demand, such that the relative difficulty of access to specific social stations varies directly with their perceived (and constructed) level of desirability. Conceivably, research of this sort should prove invaluable in helping us theorize the ritualized political economy of status in pre-modern societies. But that is a very large undertaking.

Notes

- 1 Schurtz (1902) and Webster (1908). For recent discussions of the import of these works, see Völger and von Welck (1990).
- 2 Nietzsche's discussion of the Dionysiac in *The Birth of Tragedy* is relevant here, but the most important single passage is found in *Genealogy of Morals* II §17, where he argued, *pace* notions of social contract, that the state originated with "some pack of blond beasts of prey, a conqueror and master race which, organized for war and with the ability to organize, unhesitatingly lays its terrible claws upon a populace perhaps tremendously superior in numbers but still formless and nomad." [irgendein Rudel blonder Raubtiere, eine Eroberer- und Herren-Rasse, welche, kriegerisch organisiert und mit der Kraft, zu organisieren, unbedenklich ihre furchtbaren Tatzen auf eine der Zahl nach vielleicht ungeheuer überlegene, aber noch gestaltlose, noch schweifende Bevölkerung legt. Dergestalt beginnt ja der »Staat« auf Erden: ich denke, jene Schwärmerei ist abgetan, welche ihn mit einem »Vertrage« beginnen ließ.] Trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale.
- 3 Of particular importance in this vein were Blüher (1919) and (1924), Hauer (1923) and Baumlér (1934).
- 4 Of particular importance were Tacitus's *Germania*, chapters 7, 11, 13–14, 31, and 43. Cf. Weiser (1927), Höfler (1934). Another member of this group was Richard Wolfram, who studied German sword-dances and folklore in a similar light and, like Höfler, later served in the SS Ahnenerbe. Olof Bockhorn (1988) 68–83, (1987) 229–37 and (1994) 477–526, has written a good deal concerning Rudolf Much and his students. Specifically on Lily Weiser, see Niem (1998) 25–52; on Höfler, Birkhan (1987/88) 385–406, Zimmermann (1994) 5–27, and Behringer (1997).
- 5 Nyberg (1938; Swedish original 1937) shows these interests, which were developed more fully in works by his students, Stig Wikander (1938) and Geo Widengren (1969).
- 6 Sjoestedt (1940).
- 7 Dumézil (1942).
- 8 Jeanmaire (1939).
- 9 Vidal-Naquet (1981; English trans., 1986).
- 10 See, for instance, Arthur Edward Waite (1909), Annie Besant (1912), Rudolf Steiner (1961).

- 11 See, *inter alia*, René Guénon (1927), idem, (1946), idem, (1950), Julius Evola (1931), idem (1934) (1964).
- 12 Corbin (1971), idem (1983), Schuon (1958). On Corbin, see Jambet (1981) and Wasserstrom (1999).
- 13 On Guénon, see James (1981), Laurant *et al.* (1985), Faivre (1994) 100–2; on Evola, Sheehan (1986) 279–92, Ferraresi (1987), Gugenberger and Schweidlenka (1987) 129–32, and Wasserstrom (1995).
- 14 In the last decade, forty-three works by Guénon have been re-published, thirty in English translation (mostly by Sophia Perennis and Universalis of Ghent, NY), two in Spanish, one in Portuguese, and the rest in the original French. For Evola, the figures are: thirty-eight titles total, twenty in Italian (most by the Fondazione Julius Evola in Rome), twelve in English (most by Inner Tradition of Rochester, VT or Oriental Classics of Edmonds, WA), three in Spanish, two in French, one in German.
- 15 Eliade (1958). This work was written in French, but first presented in English translation as the Haskell lectures Eliade gave at the University of Chicago in Fall 1956, before joining the faculty. A paperback edition was published under the title *Rites and Symbols of Initiation: The Mysteries of Birth and Rebirth* (1958) and the French text appeared as *Naissances mystiques: Essai sur quelques types d'initiation* (1959).
- 16 Eliade's relations with these authors have begun to receive a great deal of attention, especially from Italian scholars. Most fully, see Pisi (1998) 43–133. de Turreis (1995) 219–49 and Montanari (1995) are also useful. An excellent discussion in English is forthcoming from Steven Wasserstrom, "Eliade and Evola," in Elliot R. Wolfson and Jeffrey Kripal, eds., *The Unknown, Remembered Gate: Religious Experience and Hermeneutical Reflection in the Study of Religion* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, forthcoming).
- 17 Handoca (1993) vol. 1, 277: "Il est frappant que vous avez un souci extrême de ne mentionner dans vos ouvrages aucun auteur qui n'appartient strictement à la littérature universitaire la plus officielle . . . tandis que on ne trouve un seul mot pas seulement sur M. Guénon, mais aussi sur des autres auteurs dont les idées sont bien plus voisines à celles qui vous permettent de vous horizons avec sûreté dans la matière que vous traitez."
- 18 Ibid., 278: "Pour ce qui regarde vos éclaircissements à propos de vos relations avec la «maçonnerie» académique, je les trouve assez satisfaisants. Il s'agirait alors moins de méthodologie que d'une pure tactique, et contre le tentatif d'introduire quelques chevaux de Troie dans la citadelle universitaire on ne saurait dire rien." Many years later, Eliade (1989) 163 gave a different (and rather self-serving) account of how he responded to Evola's rebuke: "My argument couldn't have been simpler. The books I write are intended for today's audience, and not for initiates."
- 19 The fullest discussion is that of Pisi (1998) 73–80, with quotation of other related documents. See also de Turreis (1995) 243.
- 20 Eliade (1958) ix.
- 21 Ibid. ix–x.
- 22 The juxtaposition of "traditional" and "pre-Judaic" appears only once, at p. xii, within a paragraph that introduces Eliade's view that "archaic" or "traditional" societies were oriented toward sacred origins, as narrated in myth, and lacked the kind of historic consciousness that first developed in the Hebrew Bible. For the fullest explication, see Eliade (1954; French original, 1949).
- 23 Eliade (1958) xii.

- 24 Ibid., p. 122.
- 25 Conceivably, Jungian writings should be considered another major lineage of initiation discourse. Along these lines, see the revealing, if occasionally overstated, discussions of Noll (1994) and (1997).
- 26 Ibid., 135.
- 27 Montanari (1995) stresses this point, calling attention to the remarks Eliade made in 1978 concerning Guénon (1978: 170): “I read René Guénon fairly late and certain of his books interested me a great deal, especially *L’Homme et son devenir selon le Vedānta*, which I found very beautiful, intelligent, and profound. But there was a whole side of Guénon that irritated me: his outrageously polemical side and his brutal rejection of all modern Western culture: as if teaching at the Sorbonne sufficed to make one lose all chance at understanding anything. Nor did I like his opaque disdain toward certain works of modern art and literature.” As Paola Pisi (1998) has noted, however, at least part of this statement is a disingenuous attempt to revise the record, since Eliade hardly began reading Guénon late; rather, he first cited the French master in 1927, when he himself was but twenty years old.
- 28 Durkheim’s significant writings on religion begin with his essay “De la définition des phénomènes religieux,” *L’Année sociologique* 2 (1899): 1–28. This and other early pieces have been assembled in English translation by Pickering (1994). His magnum opus, of course, is *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse* (1912). Although it is convenient to start with Durkheim, he did not invent *ex nihilo*, but built on suggestions he found in earlier authors, above all Numa Fustel de Coulanges, one of his teachers, and W. Robertson Smith, whose importance he always acknowledged.
- 29 Quoted in Belmont (1979) 2.
- 30 Van Gennep (1906). Mauss’s review appeared in the Durkheimians’ flagship journal, *L’Année sociologique* 10 (1907): 226–9 and has been reprinted in Mauss (1968) 70–3.
- 31 For discussion of the election, see Fournier (1994) 319–23. The quotation from Meillet is given at page 322, n. 2.
- 32 Van Gennep (1909).
- 33 Durkheim himself went unmentioned in Van Gennep’s text. Of the other Durkheimians, Mauss is cited five times, Henri Hubert three, and Henri Beuchat once. Several of these are perfunctory and some quite respectful, but none is polemic.
- 34 See, above all, Hubert and Mauss (1899) – reprinted in Mauss (1968) 1: 193–307 – idem (1909).
- 35 *L’Année sociologique* 11 (1910): 200–2, reprinted in Mauss, (1968) 1: 553–5.
- 36 On Van Gennep’s life and work, see Belmont (1979). Mauss (1933) 39, reprinted in (1969) 440, grudgingly noted the value of Van Gennep’s later, folkloric researches.
- 37 On Gluckman, see the discussion of Kuper (1973) 177–88.
- 38 For development of these views, see Gluckman (1965).
- 39 The two landmark articles on ritual are Gluckman (1940) and his Frazer lecture of 1952, “Rituals of Rebellion in South and South-east Africa,” reprinted in (1963) 110–36.
- 40 Turner (1957).
- 41 Gluckman (1962).
- 42 Turner (1962).
- 43 Max Gluckman, “*Les rites de passage*,” op. cit., n. 12.
- 44 Ibid. 9.
- 45 Ibid. 37–8.

- 46 Van Gennep (1960).
- 47 On Turner, see Babcock (1984), Turner and Turner (1985), McLaren (1985) and Ashley (1990).
- 48 The lecture, “Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites of Passage*”, was first presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Ethnological Society (March 1964) and was then published as Turner (1964) and in Turner (1967) 93–111.
- 49 Ibid. 97.
- 50 Turner (1969).
- 51 Turner (1974) 53–4.
- 52 Ibid. 233.
- 53 Brelich (1969). Brelich had already been interested in these materials before the translation of Van Gennep made its appearance. See the notes from courses he offered at the University of Rome: Brelich (1961a) and (1961b).
- 54 Vidal-Naquet (1981). Since *Le chasseur noir*, numerous other works have appeared, including Sourvinou-Inwood (1988), Dowden (1989), Moreau (1992), Sergent (1996), Lada-Richards (1998), Giuman (1999), and Waldner (2000).
- 55 Turner (1967) 99–100: “It must be understood that the authority of the elders over the neophytes is not based on legal sanctions; it is in a sense the personification of the self-evident authority of tradition. The authority of the elders is absolute, because it represents the absolute, the axiomatic values of society in which are expressed the ‘common good’ and the common interest. The essence of the complete obedience of the neophytes is to submit to the elders but only in so far as they are in charge, so to speak, of the common good and represent in their persons the total community.”

INITIATIONS AND INITIATORY EXPERIENCE

James M. Redfield

In the succession of the generations the elders eventually die and leave someone their property, but since ideas are in principle immortal, title to intellectual citizenship is not so easily acquired; we have to prove ourselves. Often it seems, especially to academics, that this requires us to clear out some previously reputable figures and in this way make space for our own development. The review of the literature can become an Oedipal killing ground, and this is healthy. Zeus had to displace Kronos. On the other hand, Kronos is an ambiguous figure: the child-eater is also the benign king of the original – or infinitely distant – happy land. He is the good father of our infancy as well as the cruel tyrant of our adolescence. So also our intellectual predecessors gave us life and the means to livelihood even though we must push them back in order to find the room to think our own thoughts.

One ancestor who is recurrently the focus of this collection is Pierre Vidal-Naquet, whose “Black Hunter” was in its time a virtuoso piece, bringing together (as Irene Polinskaya here explains) at least five things previously unconnected: a social institution (the *ephebeia*), a real landscape (the Athenian frontier), an imaginary landscape (what Homer calls the *agrou ep’ eschatien*, “at the edge of the arable land”, a space we meet in poetry, Oedipus’ Cithaeron or Tmolus where the goddesses sought out Paris), a myth (of Melanthus) and a ritual (the Apatouria) – all this while finding analogous features in the Oschophoria and *krypteia*. Polinskaya points out that in so doing Vidal-Naquet treats the “imaginary” frontiers as equivalent to the actual frontiers where the ephebes did their service. The reason there are two sets, however, is to make them different, even contrasting; this therefore is a fault by the rules of the game Vidal-Naquet is playing. He should at least have asserted that ephebic service, for all that it took place in the comfort of civilized, nearly urban, communities, was nevertheless conceived in terms of the symbolic imagined frontiers of poetry.

This collection, however, is not about Vidal-Naquet but about “initiation” – variously here a phenomenon, a category, a concept, and most frequently a

paradigm. “The Black Hunter” is focal because the essay brings to bear two patterns often thought typical of initiatory rites: travel from the center to the periphery and back, with a period of segregation in the middle (Van Gennep), and inversion as characteristic of the middle, liminal phase. “On the concept of inversion” says Vidal-Naquet, “one could quote the whole of Lévi-Strauss’s work.” He could have said almost the same of Victor Turner, who has been even more influential in the field of Classics. It might, however, be useful to notice a difference: whereas Lévi-Strauss generally treats inversion as a reaffirmation of the system – as we might test the firmness of a framework by turning it over – Turner generally sees inversion as an assertion of the underlying unity of the opposites: the new king undergoes a ritual of degradation in order to assert his continuing connection with those from whom coronation will separate him. The prospective initiate is rolled in the mud in order to reduce him to that *prima materia* of which we are all composed. Turner was in love with liminality and anti-structure because to him they meant *communitas*, the deletion of social difference.

In any case, segregation, liminality, and anti-structure have all been fashionable ideas and like all fashionable ideas they have been thoughtlessly used – among so many others, by Segal in his account of the *Frogs*, as Radcliffe Edmonds here shows, and by Vidal-Naquet himself in his account of the *Philoctetes* as argued here by David Brooks Dodd. I commend to these promising scholars, however, a word of advice I myself received long ago from Antony Andrewes, sometime Wykham Professor in the University of Oxford, and probably the best teacher I ever had. I had written a paper in which I had refuted – indeed, as far as in me lay, had expunged, extirpated, annihilated – some part of the work of a then-respected figure; he handed it back with the remark: “I always think the best kind of polemic is just to go ahead and do something better yourself.” As your own ideas come into fashion, gentlemen, they will be overused, and misused, by others and possibly even by yourself, because we all have a weakness for our earlier insights. This is not a reason not to have ideas. For better and for worse ideas make their own way in the world.

Anyway, reading through this collection got me thinking about initiations, particularly about the question: what is the difference between the initiatory and the educational? Aristotle, I remember, says that the initiate at Eleusis does not learn but rather has an experience, a *pathos*. What is the difference? Education seems to add something on; initiation seems to make a change. Travel is broadening but not in itself usually initiatory; it becomes so if it confers a new social status: the west-African who has been to London (and can thus be called adjectivally “been-to”), the Muslim who has been to Mecca, these become different persons from their fellows.

Because it makes a change initiation means loss as well as gain. Through education we know more, but initiation also involves the loss of innocence. Growth and discovery are not in themselves initiatory; first love is probably

not an initiation – but first sexual experience certainly is. The initiates at Eleusis did indeed learn something, but they learned it as a secret, therefore they could not use it, communicate it; they were burdened with it, marked by it. It did not belong to them; rather they belonged to it as members of the circle of those who knew it.

Almost any experience can be initiatory of a particular person in particular circumstances: combat, winning the lottery, incarceration, wearing evening dress, dancing in the Nutcracker, acquiring a library card, starting a new job, successfully making a joke in a foreign language. It varies with the person whether these experiences shape us, mark us, so that we are not the same for them. We recognize such an experience because it is always double: we become new persons to ourselves and conceive ourselves as newly represented to the others. This new representation is a role, which we experience as an identity. We thus experience discontinuity in our social existence; on the level of the personality history that now eventuates in structure.

Structure is always pre-existent to experience; roles are socially constructed, so that the initiatory experience is one of social reconstruction. When the young Jew takes his place at the bema for the first time to chant the Torah the congregation tells him: today you are a man. Rituals of initiation develop around these moments when they recur and where there is social concern for those who are called to them. The ritual does not create the role; indeed the ritual is not always a precondition of the role, either sufficient or necessary. Because Judaism, for instance, is a hereditary condition the true Bar Mitzvah is the thirteenth birthday – or more precisely, the sabbath after the thirteenth birthday. On that day the Jew becomes eligible to be called to the Torah. On the other hand, a Jew has obligations that can be fulfilled only by those who are properly trained; the ceremony of a boy's Bar Mitzvah is both a demonstration of that training and a celebration of its completion. It is of course many other things as well: an occasion for family unity and the display of family unity, an occasion on which all concerned, in their different ways, rediscover and display their religious commitment, an occasion for generosity and the display of generosity. Nor is this an exceptional case; David Leitaó here shows us the same kind of multiple functioning in ancient rituals of cutting the hair. Rituals are overdetermined; that is their strength.

In any case the initiatory experience is not derived from the ritual; rather the ritual is derived from the experience, which it aims to clarify, motivate, normalize, support, and explain. To be called to the Torah for the first time must always have been initiatory, even when, as in the *stetl*, there was no special fuss about it. Modern American congregations make a huge fuss about it in order to make sure that it happens, and to help it happen. The occasion is something to look forward to during the training that makes it possible; the proud grandparents and the table covered with presents are signs of the value of this moment, and of the value of Jewish observance in general. The special blessings, the remarks of the Rabbi and of the candidate himself, all these are

reflections on the meaning of the event. The ritual gives further significance to what is happening anyway.

Few experiences are as initiatory as puberty, which is signaled by unequivocal organic signs: menarche in females, first wet dream in males. Puberty rituals do not make these things happen; the ritual rather gives them a meaning, tells what is happening, why it is happening, and that it is legitimate. To confer meaning in this way is a form of social action, and requires resources, fundamentally time and space. The community can set aside occasions and places where these meanings can be enacted. Through seclusion and inversion the experience of social reconstruction can be elaborated into an experience of virtual death and rebirth. Paradoxically, the elaboration of the experience makes it normal by taking it seriously: the transformation from child to adult, the ritual says, is indeed difficult, frightening, and hugely important, and we all go through it, and this is how we do.

It is not the form of the elaboration, however, which makes the ritual initiatory. The same forms can certainly be used for other purposes. The attempt to classify rituals in terms of their form is therefore misguided – in fact because of the overdetermination of rituals it is generally a mistake to try to classify them at all. A society wedding is not accurately described as the act of legitimating prospective children – although it does this – since this end could have been achieved at one ten-thousandth of the cost. We should notice what else is going on. Rituals should not be classified but described and explored; like dreams their meaning is indefinitely complex and probably always still to seek. It is helpful to notice that certain forms are frequent in rituals which for other reasons we would characterize as primarily initiations, just as we may notice that dreams of flying are first frequent in children in their sixth year. This does not mean that if I dream of flying it means that I am five years old – although it is worth asking if my dream perhaps signals a regression to issues which go back to that time.

Also we may observe that rituals with some other purpose may contrive initiatory experiences: to appear in an Athenian tragic chorus must have been such an experience, to which the seclusion, discipline, disguise, and public display all contributed. These are familiar techniques of initiation, and they are initiatory in effect even when employed to some other end. I agree with Fritz Graf that the *arrêphoria* was not an initiation – I tend to agree with Froma Zeitlin that its primary intention had to do with the relation between the Athenians and their soil – but it was certainly an initiatory experience for the little girls who carried the basket. Was the *arkteia* an initiation? If you believe, as I do, that every Athenian girl was expected to go through it at some time before marriage it certainly was, but I also agree with Chris Faraone that it was sacrificial in form – I would suggest, in fact, that it was a kind of first-fruits sacrifice, sacralizing the cohort not by sacrificing some girls, but by each girl making her own small sacrifice. Sacrifice and initiation are, however, by

no means contrasting categories. I would also agree with Faraone that the *arkteia* was distinct from the Brauronia, a peneteric festival involving, among other things, a rather raucous public procession. I would, however, further suggest that for a few girls the two were connected, and that what is “worth boasting about” in the *Lysistrata* is precisely to have been one of those select few who “played the bear at the Brauronia.” The Brauronia, I suspect, was like a society wedding; somebody was the [prospective] bride, but that was not the main thing that was going on.

Finally, there is the issue of the initiation paradigm in narrative. Obviously a narrative can include an initiatory ritual as part of the story; that is not a problem. The application of the paradigm in narrative analysis becomes questionable when the analyst, observing that some forms of experience characteristic of initiatory rituals occur in the story, asserts that the story is an initiation or has the form of one. Neoptolemus in the *Philoctetes* goes to a desert island, behaves as he has not before and does not expect to again – and therefore is being initiated. Done rigidly this kind of analysis is worse than useless. It is however possible to see that Neoptolemus’ experience is initiatory, without either reducing his story to some paradigm, or treating him as the main character of the play. Anything that makes life intelligible may be intelligible in fiction, initiatory forms included, but the meaning of the particular narrative is still to seek. I read somewhere that there are only three stories: boy meets girl, a stranger comes to town, and growing up. This might even be true, but we haven’t done much when we have seen that this or that story includes one or more of these archetypes. What is stuffed into a pigeon-hole goes out of sight and is no longer available for study – or, I may say, enjoyment.

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